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# The Church and Labour.

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BY  
Rev. L. McKENNA, S.J., M.A.



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# The Church and Labour

A SERIES OF SIX TRACTS

BY

REV. L. McKENNA, S.J., M.A.



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## “THE CHURCH AND LABOUR.”

**I**T was for the use and benefit of the whole human race that God destined the material resources which He placed in the world. To-day there is a monstrous inequality in the distribution of these resources. A comparatively small number of men hold a disproportionate amount of them. In France, for instance, a hundredth part of the nation owns half of the nation's wealth. In England and the United States one-tenth of the people hold nine-tenths of the whole country's property.

The wealthy few now rule the world. They have done so before, but never precisely in virtue of their wealth; they were patriarchs, patricians, chieftains of clans, feudal nobles acknowledging responsibilities and bearing heavy burdens. To-day wealth making no sacrifices for the public good, rules in its own right, and exercises a more despotic sway than any form of authority hitherto known. It has armies and fleets at command. It has myriads of placemen, or would-be placemen, in utter dependence. It is highly centralised, and can exert a great power at any point. It can at any moment cast thousands of households into intolerable misery. Yet, though centralised, it is not open to attack. It does not, as the kings of old, dwell in castles that can be stormed by an angry people. On the contrary it stands as the embodiment of legality, order, security, peace—even of popular will. Capitalism, using the work of the labouring classes, has vastly increased the wealth of the world; yet it strives to prevent these labouring classes from benefiting by this increase. It is constantly drawing up into itself that wealth and diverting it from useful purposes. To

crowns all, by its wild pursuit of pleasure and its ostentatious luxury, it renders still less bearable the lot of the dispossessed.

Over against this small number of very rich men there are the vast masses of the poor. In Prussia two-thirds of the wage-earners receive less than 18s. a week. Fifty per cent. of the American people are in severe poverty. At Paris every seventh and in London every twelfth person is a pauper dependent on State aid. Every great city has a large population living in homeless, hopeless, helpless squalor and wretchedness. To use the words of Pope Leo—"A very small number of rich men have been able to lay on the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself."

This suffering state of the poor is all the more galling as it is in ironic contrast with the power which in theory they possess. They have votes—they are appealed to as the ultimate depositories of all power, yet nowhere have they been able to exert that power for the redress of their grievances.

Is it any wonder, then, that the rich and the poor should form two hostile camps, that they should feel for each other bitter hatred, that their hatred should break out in war? And such war! Those terrible strikes! Factories shut down, vast systems of machinery idle, trade ruined, the social life of nations paralysed, homes broken up, men growling and breaking into violence, women pining with anxiety and hunger, children starving.

Is it any wonder that the old questions which agitated the world should have lost much of their interest? It is not now quarrels between princes or rival claimants to thrones, it is not even commercial or territorial disputes between nations that cause most anxiety in the council chambers of the world. It is the question as to whether the constitution of our present society is not fundamentally wrong, it is the question as to how the wealth of each nation should be distributed among

its members ; it is the social, or—what is the same thing—the labour question, that urgently presses for solution in every country.

The struggle over this question is in Ireland. raging not merely in France—to-day as ever the leader in revolutionary action—but in Russia, which has just emerged from the Middle Ages, in England, the land of tradition and slow change, in Germany, fettered by her iron military organisation. Now this struggle, raging on the Continent and in England, is a real and very pressing danger for us in Ireland too. Indeed it has been going on among us, but it has been disguised under the form of a national struggle. Our whole social system is part of the social system of England, the classic land of capitalistic abuse, but hardly any except the suffering strata of that system are to be found in Ireland. The population of Ireland consists chiefly of a relatively large middle class struggling against great difficulties, and of a relatively enormous proletariat struggling desperately on the verge of pauperism. Both these classes have united against the abuses of capital, but in doing so they have directed their attacks, not against capital as such, but against capital as represented by a foreign Government. Thus in Ireland the struggle between capital and the suffering classes has not had hitherto the character of a social war, which it has on the Continent. The suffering classes have not been led to confuse the abuses of capital with the rights of property, and with the principles on which all society is founded.

But circumstances are rapidly changing. It is likely that the two forces now locked in a life and death struggle on the Continent will soon be engaged in a fierce conflict in Ireland too, ranged under the same banners, urged on by the same battle cries, animated by the same bitter feelings on each side.

The strikes, rapidly becoming more frequent, notably the great strike of eighteen months ago, which paralysed the life and trade of the country and was accompanied by disorder in many of our towns, seem to show that

there is a spirit of discontent and a craving for change deep down in the hearts of our labouring population. Indeed a slight acquaintance with the labouring classes leaves one in no doubt on the point.

Now, that the poor classes should be discontented is not astonishing. Their discontent is well-founded. Their desire of change is legitimate and praiseworthy. Society is sick to death. She must be cured. But her disease is not more dangerous than the remedies which men—on the one side selfish and unfeeling, on the other side desperate, envious, and vengeful—propose to apply.

**The danger to  
Society comes  
from the  
false principles  
often inspiring  
Capital and  
Labour.**

discontented is not astonishing. Their discontent is well-founded. Their desire of change is legitimate and praiseworthy. Society is sick to death. She must be cured. But her disease is not more dangerous than the remedies which men—on the one side selfish and unfeeling,

The real danger that threatens the world comes from this, that both the mighty forces now struggling for mastery—labour and capital—reject the moral and religious bonds without which society cannot hope to hold together.

On the one side, wealth claims to do as it pleases regardless of consequence to the poor. On the other, numbers claim a divine right to rule. Liberalism\* in one or other of its forms is the favourite doctrine of wealth; Socialism in some form tends to be the gospel of Labour. Liberalism justifies the rich in exploiting the poor; Socialism justifies the poor in robbing the rich. Liberalism commends itself to the rich man, for it flatters his avarice and pride; Socialism appeals to the poor man, for it sets before his eyes the alluring prospect of a state where all having little work to do will enjoy in equal measure the good things of life.

\* By the terms Liberalism, Liberal, etc., frequently occurring in these pages are meant certain doctrines or ideas the general tendency of which is explained on pages 9-10. These terms are often loosely used with reference to those who favour democratic institutions, and even to those who are generous in their private dealings with their neighbours. Needless to say that such are not the meanings of these terms as used in the following pages. Still less is any reference intended to the principles which are claimed as distinguishing the political party which in England is known as the Liberal Party.

If Capital can carry out its principles of Liberalism, the majority of mankind, the middle class as well as the poor, must sink to a still more hopeless depth of servitude, destitution, misery and crime. If Labour realises its Socialistic schemes, our property, our liberty, our family life, our peace, all that we hold most dear, will be attacked. Human society—that most delicate organism in which physical environment and economic force and the myriad influences of men's desires, passions, prejudices, customs, render the result of even the slightest interference impossible to conjecture—is to be handed over to be experimented on by fanciful theorists and revengeful fanatics and unscrupulous schemers. Revolution always tends to fall into the hands of extremists; and it is the wild, revolutionary Socialism of the Continent, and not the milder forms of English Socialism, which is likely in time to win the support of the masses.

Yet of the two—Liberalism and Socialism—Liberalism is, perhaps, the more dangerous. Socialism is indeed only a reaction, and not even the worst form of reaction, against the accursed Liberalism which, since the eighteenth century, has been making havoc of society.

You will, perhaps, say: "What has the Church to do with all this? Two great political forces are pitted against each other. Why should the Church interfere? She does not intervene when two nations are at war? Why should she intervene when two classes of society are at war? Politics are not her domain. Should she not be indifferent to all forms of government? Political economy is not her sphere. Why, then, should she meddle with the modern social question?"

I answer to this, in the first place, that those who speak thus are in very suspicious company. Such language, or something very like it, is addressed to the Church by both the partisans of Liberalism and those of Socialism.

**Liberalism the enemy of religion.**

Socialist writers are as much opposed to the Church as they are to Capitalism. The official philosophy of Socialism on the Continent, and for the most part in England too, rejects all religion. "The Church," they say—I quote one of its official organs in France—"urges men to be indifferent to earthly welfare and to work for eternal happiness, while we Socialists hold the very opposite thesis, for we propose to the suffering earthly comfort." Hence it concludes: "The ends proposed by Socialism and by religion are perfectly irreconcilable." The language of many of the leaders of Socialism in England, and of the most widely read Socialist paper in England is similar. Everywhere the Socialist cries to the people. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Earth! Do not bother about the Kingdom of Heaven." Indeed such words have been heard in the capital of this Catholic country.

**Socialism the enemy of religion.**

The partisan of Liberalism is just as decided as the Socialist in resenting all interference of the Church. He tells her that she has no earthly right to interfere in the sphere of politics or political economy, or social science; and in particular he insists that she has no right to speak to him as to the way he should make his money or spend it or conduct his business.

**Liberalism has infected the public mind even in Ireland.**

The minds of many Catholics, especially of those who, like us in Ireland, live in a somewhat Protestant atmosphere, have been vitiated by this Liberalism which has ruled in every Court and Cabinet in Europe for the past one hundred and fifty years, and has infected the literature, the thought, the instincts, and the customs of the age. Many Catholics who pass as religious, and even as pious men, consider it to be large-mindedness and enlightenment to hold that the Church's authority should be limited to strictly religious matters, and her action to purely religious functions. They

feel some irritation when the pastors or priests of the Church presume to speak of the social or political or business relations which ought to exist among men.

Yet, though the Church's authority is rejected by both parties in the social struggle, and by many of her own misguided children, she has no choice but to boldly assert that authority, and to set forth her principles.

**The Church cannot be indifferent to the sufferings of the poor.**

In the first place, the miserable and degrading destitution to which such a large proportion of the human race is condemned, their "state little better than slavery," (to use the Pope's expression), cannot leave her indifferent.

People in acute suffering can think of nothing but their suffering. They cannot attend to the affairs of the soul if their attention is absorbed by the suffering of the body. "A certain amount of comfort," says St. Thomas, "is necessary for the practice of virtue." It is natural, therefore, that the Church should be anxious that all men should enjoy at least that measure of comfort and welfare which will enable them to attend to her words of salvation.

But it is not merely as though the Church found it expedient to interfere. She takes a bolder, a prouder stand.

**It is her duty to interfere in the social struggle.**

She has been set in the world by God as the authoritative exponent of truth, and has been ordered by God to teach His truth to all nations. She finds the two parties that divide the world both alike denying that truth. Each has its own remedy for the social problem, but both alike insist on regarding it as a purely economic problem to be solved independently of the eternal principles of justice and morality. Neither fear of persecution at the hands of irreligious rich nor fear of violence at the hands of the mob can make her hesitate to proclaim those principles. She, therefore, confident in the authority given her by the Creator of all society,

and obeying the commands of Christ, her founder, declares that the doctrines of both parties are wrong.

It requires very little consideration to see that the materialism which underlies the various forms of both Socialism and Liberalism, and which rejects all interference of the moral law, especially in social matters, is utterly at variance with the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

Every Christian knows that God, the Creator, is the final and supreme end of man; that the obligation laid on each individual to strive towards that end is absolute and unconditioned, dominating man's existence at all times and in all his acts. All man's activities from the noblest ones, acts of faith and hope and love which have God as their term, to the apparently unimportant or merely material ones such as eating or walking, are all dominated by man's final end, and have no other value or meaning except in so far as they enable man to rise to God. They are, therefore, endowed with a moral character, or at least have to conform to a moral standard.

**because social relations have a moral aspect.**

Now, in creating man, God might have attached each individual to Himself alone, so that each man should attain his final end by acts of a purely individual character, just as though he were the only man in the world. But God has not so created man. He has so formed human society that men's acts have not merely an individual, but a social character. He has multiplied the points of contact between the individuals that form society. He has surrounded each man with a network of multitudinous influences rights and duties. He has placed between Himself and each individual a host of others, so that each man has to strive to God by acts that affect others.

If, then, even acts which do not affect our neighbour, are dominated by moral laws, much more must the activities of social life be dominated by them. The phenomena of economic life have indeed a material aspect; they can be expressed in terms of physical



science, but they are made up of human and not of purely physical activities, and therefore are to be governed by moral laws, and therefore fall within the authority of the Church, the Divine interpreter of that law.

For instance, if manual labour were a mere pastime, not affecting anyone but the workman, it would still be susceptible of moral attributes, it would be in any given case either right or wrong. But as it is necessary for the well-being—for the very existence of man, and absorbs a great part of the energies of the human race, and creates myriads of relations between man and man, it necessarily becomes the matter of multitudinous obligations and rights, and the Church is within her sphere when she defines those obligations and rights.

In so doing the Church is not trenching on the domain of civil society. She is merely declaring with authority the solution of the various questions involving morality or religious truth which the constitution or the development of civil society presents for solution.

This is the prerogative given her by God. She has always claimed and exercised it, and it is more than ever necessary that she should do so to-day.

**Her interference most necessary to-day.** The fierce struggle which convulses modern society, the struggle between wealth obstinately clinging to privilege, and poverty challenging that privilege in passionate indignation, has raised questions of the profoundest moral consequence, questions affecting the lives and the consciences of every individual in every nation. Liberalism on the one hand and Socialism on the other have formulated codes of doctrine which are completely opposed to God's law, and which the Church is imperatively called on to condemn and combat.

**Liberalism** Liberalism, perhaps the more dangerous of the two, exaggerates the importance of individual liberty. It regards man as in the first place naturally good, and in the second, naturally impelled to improve his circum-

stances. It therefore demands full liberty for him. It expects that the result will be the improvement of the individual and at the same time the improvement of society, the aggregate of individuals. Its general tendency is to consider each man as a being apart from others, detaching him from his social life and abstracting from his social relations.

Against this the Church teaches that  
**condemned by** such liberty is utterly subversive of  
**the Church.** human society, that it leads to anarchy.

She teaches that man has duties, natural and essential duties to his neighbour; that man is to attain his final happiness by acts which have an effect on those surrounding him; that these acts call for moral control, and that this moral regulation is all the more necessary as man's nature is vitiated and inclined to evil. She teaches that man is called on to fulfil his numerous obligations as a member of the various natural and necessary societies in which God places him, the family, the city, the nation; that he is subject to the authority which directs each of these societies to its proper good; she teaches that it is her prerogative to declare men's duties to each other in these societies, and the moral relations of these societies one to the other. Human freedom thus limited by social obligations becomes true liberty.

If Liberalism exaggerates liberty,  
**Socialism** Socialism tends to destroy it. Socialism subordinates the individual to the State, as though the individual were made for the State, as though the State were not rather a mere system planned for the good of the individual.

To suit the working of the Socialist State, the personal dignity of the individual human being, his supernatural destiny, his essential duties to God, are ignored; his rights to property are unduly curtailed; all his legitimate liberties, liberty of association, liberty of conscience, liberty of choice as to a state of life, liberty of education, are restrained beyond due measure; the functions of the family are interfered with.

The Church has no choice but to **also condemned.** condemn every such system which proposes to ignore or destroy the institutions and the relations which God ordained as essential to every form of society.

**The power of  
the Church to  
cure social evils.**

The Church, then, has the right and the duty of condemning both the parties which are now striving for the mastery of the world. But will her interference be of any effect? Has she the power of bringing back peace to distracted society?

Well, her Popes and pastors look forward to the results of her interference with an exuberant confidence; and significant, too, is the fact that many writers who hate and reject the Church, admit the mighty influence she has in the world, and note with alarm that that influence hardly ever promised to be so powerful as it promises to-day. "It is certain," writes one of them, "that the Church never had a better chance of establishing her sway than at present." "The danger is increasing," wrote another great infidel author; "Pope Leo XIII. is preparing a crusade which another Pope may bring to triumph."

Yes, the Church undertakes to bring back order into the present chaotic state of society, and she has the power to do so. It is not the first time that she has had to grapple with the labour problem—and the labour problem is the social problem—and has solved it.

**She has done so  
in the past when  
she abolished  
slavery.**

It met her at her entrance into the world. At the beginning of the Christian era all labour was slave labour. Labourers were then bought and sold as dogs or horses, and were the absolute property of their owners. They were treated exactly as their owners thought fit to treat them. They had no redress, no rights of any kind. Their very children were not their own, but their masters'. Think of the result of such a system on the minds and characters of both masters and slaves; on

the masters' side callousness, cruelty, luxury, pride, idleness; on the side of the slaves spiritlessness, cowardice, flattery, falsehood, hatred. Such was the unpromising state of society when the Church came to reform it; and remember that slaves far outnumbered freemen, and that to deliver them was to work a greater revolution, a more complete subversal of the constitution of society than even a Socialistic revolution would be to-day. Remember, too, how weak the Church was, how apparently unequal to the task. At first twelve poor fishermen, and for a hundred years after, only a small number of poor and despised men, mostly slaves, "weavers, washermen, illiterate clowns," as a Roman writer of the time scornfully calls them. Yet the Church little by little mitigated the awful condition of the working classes, the slaves, and finally brought about their complete emancipation.

Such a gigantic work took time, but in time the Church gave the poor labouring slave his wife, his children, his home. She gave him his wages to be his own, she gave him prosperity and content.

What means did she use to thus transform the world? Only the peaceful means taught her by Christ. She made no pompous declarations of the rights of man. She did not summon the millions of suffering slaves to rise, slaughter their terrified owners, and reduce society to anarchy. No! she made masters feel that they were not superior in the essential dignity of manhood to their slaves, and she made slaves feel that they were not inferior in the essential dignity of manhood to their masters. She taught them both alike, masters and slaves, that they were members of one family, that of Jesus Christ; that they were, both alike, sent into the world for one purpose only, to serve God; that by performing their duties to each other, duties of service in the one case, duties of kindness in the other, they would gain the same eternal reward and meet in perfect equality before God. The idea that labour is something to be ashamed of could not live in the Church

**The means she employed.**

founded by Christ the carpenter. She loved the poor slaves with a special love. Many of her children in the early days were slaves. She entrusted her divine mysteries to their hands and raised one of them to be her ruler, Christ's Vicar on earth. When she had softened and humanised the relations between masters and slaves she was easily able to persuade those who owned slaves to liberate them, and thus little by little she banished slavery from the world without shock or violence.

Thus did the Church solve the Labour problem as it presented itself to her in her early days. In the feudal ages it presented itself again under another form, and again she solved it.

**She solved  
the labour  
problem in the  
Middle Ages.**

The great lords and barons who ruled Europe sought to oppress the towns situated within their territories. To resist their unjust exactions the Church formed the trade guilds. These were originally religious confraternities, but the Church reorganised them for the protection of the tradesmen. Each guild comprised all those of the same trade within the town, and formed of them a strongly compacted body held together by religious feeling and by a family spirit. Each guild had a monopoly of its trade in the town, and limited competition within itself by minute regulations as to wages and conditions of work. Each guild relieved by its care and its material resources any of its members (and, in case of need, the families of any of its members), who were afflicted by distress of any kind, sickness, bereavement, old age, even imprisonment.

Thus, while the Church held sway in Europe, work was held in high esteem, labourers were well content, wages were good and constant, excessive toil was restricted, strikes were needless, the homes of the poor united and happy, that social monstrosity, a strong man starving, was unknown; a spirit of religion and family union and solidarity secured social peace.

In time the Reformation, with its offspring the Liberal philosophy of the eighteenth century, spread its

fatal errors. A false spirit of liberty arose to disrupt Christian society. The guilds lost their ancient spirit and strength, and had in Western Europe fallen into decay when the French Revolution finally destroyed them.

**To-day the sad state of the labouring classes** Again, to-day the eternal labour problem under a new form has grown to be the problem of the world. Again it must be solved if the world is to be at peace.

The workman is not now a slave. He is free to make his contract, but he is often not free from hunger. His body is not sold in the market-place, but his life and strength are marketable objects, and their price may be run down to a starvation rate. He is not bound by any bond of serfdom to work for any lord or noble, but he is bound by his craving for life to work for a master who will often just keep him from starving. His strength, his comfort, his life are crushed between two mill-stones—above, competition among employers; below, competition with machines. Machines are inanimate workers, slaves of steel and iron, which replace the living artisan of long ago. Those who tend them have harder and certainly more wearing work than the tradesmen of past ages; and though they may get good pay, they may at any moment be thrown out of employment by the commercial crises that occur so frequently. They have no feeling of security, for, if their strength fails them, any Insurance scheme is a poor substitute for the reliable and (above all) the thoughtful and sympathetic support which the tradesman of old could look for from his guild. If their strength fails they must go down and be trampled on in the struggle of life. Worst of all, our modern industrial system, which gives the fortunate minority of labourers work, though precarious, drives the helpless majority out of work altogether, or almost altogether, and leaves them in the street to starve or beg. The consequence is that vast multitudes of men and women are not merely poor, but destitute; not merely afflicted by the ordinary

sufferings of humanity, but are doomed to the yoke of wretchedness and misery all their lives, a yoke—to use again the strong expression of the Pope—“little better than slavery.” Their brooding anger finds expression in strikes, riots, inflammatory speeches and a revolutionary Press. Socialist orators and writers do not create this discontent. They find it in existence, and existing with good cause too. They only increase it, inflame it, profit by it. They win the allegiance of the people by appealing to their rightful sense of injury and to their passions of envy and vengeance. They rouse them to a fury of destructiveness by showing them the alluring prospect of Socialistic equality and happiness.

**is a danger  
to all Society.**

It is not now as in the revolutionary epochs of 1789 and 1848, when particular thrones or particular forms of government were threatened. Now the discontent of the masses moves them to pull down the whole fabric of civilised society. The peace and happiness of every individual is threatened, the sacred shrine of his family hearth, his rights to his property, his rights to the fruits of his labour, his personal freedom, his association with his fellows, in fact all the energies which create the wealth necessary for the poor as well as the rich, and all the laws which should guard social harmony and prosperity.

**The State  
powerless to  
arrest  
Socialism.**

In face of Socialism the modern State is practically powerless. Socialism is an idea more than it is a party, and the modern State has no right, and claims no right to combat ideas. It professes to guard liberty of thought and speech. How then can it check the writings and speeches of Socialists? It has for its law the will of the majority. What right has the majority of to-day to forbid the majority of to-morrow from being Socialist if it wishes?

Even if the State, contrary to its principles, does ban Socialistic doctrines, it is powerless to enforce the ban. Against Anarchy which contradicts the idea of the State, the State has arms, or at least arguments.

Against Socialism which merely exaggerates the notion of the State, and seeks to extend its powers, the State finds it difficult to act. As a proof of this, remark that Socialism is strongest in France and Germany—precisely the two countries where the State, a Jacobin republic in the one case, a military imperialism in the other, is most despotic and centralised.

No! there is only one power on earth that can solve this social problem—the power that has solved it more than once already. The Church of God, Author of all society, teaching God's law with the authority of God, and having at her command the resources of devotedness and enthusiasm which God's service and God's grace can inspire, is the only hope for social peace.

In the dark days of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Liberal and nineteenth century philosophy was working anew the enslavement of the people, the Church alone produced writers of genius and discernment, such as de Bonald, Lamennais, de Maistre, who warned society that in rejecting Christian justice and charity she was preparing her own destruction.

Some thirty or forty years ago, there arose all over the Catholic world an extraordinary movement of mind and action. Her pastors, such as Manning in England, Korum and Ketteler in Germany, Langenieux and Pie in France, Gibbons and Ireland in America, and a brilliant band of Catholic laymen such as de Mun and de la Tour du Pin in France, Windthorst in Germany, Decurtins in Switzerland, Vogelsang in Austria, raised their voices in eloquent pleading for the rights of the poor, and proposed measures of redress which sounded Socialistic in the ears of the many Catholics who at that time had forgotten the true social doctrine of the Church.

All over the Continent, as though a new spirit had been breathed into the Church, multitudes of priests,



and especially multitudes of lay folk of all ranks and conditions of life, nobles, merchants, artisans, faithfully following the Church's spirit, devoted themselves to the cause of the poor, agitating for their rights, providing works to help them, and binding them together in Unions.

Then these thousands of earnest Christian workers, bishops, priests, and lay folk find in 1891 a leader, no less a leader than Christ's Vicar on earth, Pope Leo XIII., who in that year wrote his famous Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

**Encyclical of  
Pope Leo XIII.**

The whole world listened to the voice of the man who spoke as the Vicar of Christ, the founder of society. His voice was listened to by sovereigns, by statesmen, by men of every calling, of every rank, of every degree of culture, of every school of thought, by those outside the Church, as well as by those within, with a reverent attention, never before perhaps accorded to any Pontifical utterance.

**Its reception  
by the world.**

The Anglican Bishop of Manchester at a large meeting declared, "The Pope has put his finger on the sore spot of the social system. He must be listened to, or the world will have to expiate its negligence by fearful punishment." The journal, *Vorwaerts*, the principal organ of Socialism in Germany, speaks thus: "The Pope has anticipated the Princes and the Governments of civilised States, and he has solved the Social problem." "Yes," it of course adds, "as far as it is possible for the present powers of the world to solve it." And M. Barrès, a French writer, a freethinker, says: "Now that the Encyclical has appeared, I cannot imagine how there can be any anti-clericals. Let some years elapse to allow old quarrels to be forgotten, and Democracy will never again regard a priest as an enemy."

There were, indeed, some interested people, even among Catholics, and some timid spirits, who were frightened by the Encyclical. They would have had no objection to the poor being instructed as to their duties, but they did not like that the Pope should speak so

strongly as to their rights. They thought it a dangerous thing for the Pope to approve many of the demands of the poor, even though he condemned Socialism—the chief of those demands.

But the Church will not champion any abuse, nor bind herself to any class. She speaks in the name of no class or rather of all classes. Nay, if, in the struggle between the power of wealth and the power of the people, the Church had to intervene as a champion and not as a mediator it is not to the side of wealth that the teaching of her Gospel or the traditions of her history would incline her.

**It is an  
exposition  
of Catholic  
social doctrine**

To high and low, rich and poor, with the force and majesty of St. Paul, the Pope expounds the laws of social right and Christian charity. He treats of economic questions, of wages, of work, of association, of profits, of all subjects which now impassion society, but he treats of them from the standpoint of Christ who cares for the full and complete interests of man, not from the narrow standpoint of Socialists and Liberal writers who both see in man only the functions of producing and consuming.

Though the Encyclical coming from the Vicar of Christ will never be found in error, it does not purport to be a detailed code of all social doctrine nor the last word to be said upon it. As regards many questions it only traces general directions and has been the occasion or rather the inspiration of new and more minute studies of social questions among Catholics.

**and it is an  
appeal for  
social action  
on the part  
of ecclesiastics**

The Encyclical is, however, not merely a declaration of Christian principle. It is a clarion call to action. It summons the whole Church to resume the social functions from which for two centuries she has been kept aloof. It calls on her to be once more the refuge, the champion, the teacher, the friend of all who need her and especially of the suffering poor.

Since the Encyclical the Bishops in every country by their pastoral letters and Synodal decrees show themselves more than ever earnestly interested in the social conditions of the countries they live in. In most seminaries special courses are given on social questions, and special priests set apart to study them more deeply. Priests, with the encouragement of their Bishops, occupy themselves with the numerous works which aim at improving and transforming the present conditions of the poorer classes. Such works are not now considered in any country on the Continent as unfit objects of priestly zeal and energy.

**and of layfolk.** But the Catholic clergy is not the Catholic Church. The Church is the body of all the faithful, and lay folk are her members not less than priests.

Christ in the person of his Vicar calls upon all her people, lay people no less than priests, to take part in this glorious work.

Nobly has his call been answered.

**Results of this appeal.** Not merely organisations for the protection of purely religious interests, such as leagues for the defence of religious education, leagues against drunkenness or evil literature, leagues to protect young girls when travelling; nor yet many charitable institutions such as are generally understood by that name, orphanages, asylums, hospices, night refuges, hospitals; but social works of a more constructive and preventive character, such as organisations for the saving of infant life, for the care of nursing mothers, crèches, housekeeping schools for girls, technical schools for boys and girls, clubs for the education and moral protection of the young, mutual societies of all kinds, co-operative societies of consumption and of production, loan funds, cheap restaurants and cheap dwellings for the poor, registry offices, consumers' leagues, Trade unions especially for the protection of unskilled labour and of women; clubs for the study of Catholic social principles, Catholic pamphlets, reviews, newspapers, congresses—all these works

and scores of others are springing up in splendored profusion all over the Continent, and are increasing daily in strength and effectiveness, founded and directed, some of them by lay people, many of them, perhaps even most of them, by priests.

Thus is the Catholic Church, obedient to the call of Christ's Vicar, striving in the words of St. Paul, "to restore all the world in Christ," to build up the shattered fabric of Society once more and to make of it a fair dwelling where all can live and serve God in happiness, as far as happiness is possible in this passing world.

Christ calls on all of us to share in this work, and surely we should not hesitate to obey Him. It is a noble work, an inspiring work, and one rich in the blessings of time and of eternity. It is a work which will further our own interests, for we shall be opposing to the forces that seek to rob us of our liberty, our property, our peace, our religion, the forces which will place comfort if not wealth, and the possibility of virtuous life within the reach of us all; it is a work in which our energies cannot be wasted, for we have an infallible guide in Christ's Church; like all works of charity it is twice blessed, for it brings consolation to those who give and to those who take, and whatever it may cost us in thought, in time, in trouble will be rewarded beyond measure, for as each of us will pass through the gates of death he will find Christ welcoming him on the threshold of Heaven: "Come, thou blessed of My Father; enter into the Kingdom prepared for you; I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink; I was naked and you covered Me; homeless and you took Me in. Amen, I say to you that what you have done to these My least brethren you have done to Me." Amen.

## “ THE CHURCH AND THE WORKMAN. ”

**Natural  
inequality of  
men**

**I**F all the world's wealth were distributed to-day in equal shares among the men and women on the earth, in a month's time the world would be again divided into rich and poor, and the social question would be again calling for solution. Men, from their birth, tend to be unlike and unequal. If we reflect how men differ from each other in physical strength, in keenness of sense, in retentiveness of memory, in power of intellect, in firmness of will, in the nature and strength of their passions and dispositions, their tastes and opinions, we can easily see that they can never be kept on a level. One will rise, another sink ; one will strive, another despair ; one will work, another idle ; the strong or the clever—that is, the few—are certain to surpass or overbear or circumvent their neighbours. The inequality of men and their passions cannot be legislated or arranged out of existence.

**The multitude  
was always  
poor but not  
always destitute,**

It is thus no new thing in the world's history that the many are poor and the few rich. It was thus in every nation that history tells of. But it was not always the case that the few were in luxury and the many in destitution.

**for example,  
in old-time  
Ireland**

It was not so in our country when we had our own civilisation. Though slavery existed in the old Irish system, as everywhere else at the time, it was restrained by the law, and the slave never seems to have sunk to the level of a beast of burden as elsewhere. Neither did slave-labour destroy free-labour. Labour as such was not despised. The free-artisan, if he was very skilled, ranked high in the social scale. The more useful classes of artisans had lands

assigned to them for their support; others were paid wages fixed by law. All of them had perfect liberty to form corporations within the tribe for the defence of their interests. The Irish system rigidly limited the powers of the chieftains and of the rich, and guarded jealously the rights and welfare of the poor. This explains why the Irish chieftains were often willing enough to give up their position as chieftains and accept instead the less restricted status of feudal lords under the English Crown, while the poor clansmen are found clinging desperately, even until the end of the seventeenth century, to the ancient Irish system.

Neither was it the case that the few  
**and in the** were in luxury and the many in desti-  
**medieval times.** tution when the Church held sway in all  
 European society in the Middle Ages.

Consider, for instance, the state of the town labourer of those days. He always belonged to some guild. When young he was apprenticed to a master and was instructed by him in his trade, lodged, fed and clothed by him as one of his own children. His wages were regulated by the guild, and were not allowed to sink beneath what would ensure him and his family a decent comfort. His master was not goaded on to oppress him with excessive work; for the competition of master-workmen (employers or contractors, as we should say), was itself restricted. If any of them undertook a contract on terms which the guild as a whole considered injurious to its general interests, the guild cancelled the contract. Every tradesman had in his guild not merely a society of mutual aid, but a society which considered it a religious duty to take care of all its members and of their families. Religion so animated the guilds that when reading their statutes one might almost imagine that they cared for nothing but their souls' welfare; yet we know that they practically ruled all the towns of Western Europe in the Middle Ages, and played a leading part in the politics of the time.

Thus the labouring man in the ages of faith, meeting his fellows constantly at the religious festivals of the

guild in the Church, or at the deliberations of the guild in the guild-hall, discussing the interests of the guild as a whole, or the affairs of those of its members who required help, felt himself a member of a larger family, could look forward with security to a comforted and honoured old age, and knew that if he died in manhood, his family would be provided for by his brethren.

These guilds, as I have said, lost their vigour after the Reformation, and died away in most places in the eighteenth century.

They were, however, in any case, doomed to disappear when the invention of steam-power transformed the whole industrial world.

Our modern system has great advantages; production has been increased a hundred-fold, means of communication and of distribution have multiplied indefinitely, capital can be easily mobilised, articles of consumption have been cheapened, and the standard of living has been raised.

**Deplorable  
condition of  
the poor in  
modern days.**

But at what a cost! A complete moral and social divorce has been effected between employer and workman. The real employers of much of the world's labour are shareholders who have no personal bonds of interest with their employees, and care only for a large dividend. When employers deal directly with labourers they are inclined to consider labour as a purely physical force, their only concern being to get it as cheaply as possible. The development of machinery while improving the condition—though leaving it precarious enough—of a minority of labourers, has doomed vast numbers of them to destitution. It is said that within the past sixty years machines have increased about five-fold while the number of workers has not even doubled. In all countries there is a vast proletariat whose condition is admitted by all thoughtful men to be deplorable, and, as Pope Leo says, "It is imperative to find some remedy, and that quickly, for the misery and wretchedness that press so heavily on the large majority of the very poor." The words of the Sacred Scripture, "Thou

shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow" have been made false in our day, for many thousands, working as no human being should have to work, cannot gain their daily bread withal.

It is with a view to remedying this scandal that Pope Leo in his Encyclical on labour speaks to individual employers, and lays down the obligations which lie upon them with regard to those who work for them. "The obligations of masters are," he says, "to pay a just wage to their men; not to injure their lawful savings by violence or fraud, or by open or hidden usury; to allow them freely to practise their religion; not to expose them to corrupting allurements or to the danger of scandal; not to entice them from a love of family and from careful thrift; not to impose on them work unsuited to their age or sex."

Notice that there is no question of charity here. Charity cannot replace justice. If the worker does not get a proper wage it is injustice, and injustice calls for justice, not for charity. A wage that allows a worker to starve should be supplemented, not by a gift, but by an increase of pay. The poor man does not ask for alms, but for work and wages, and who will say that his sense of personal dignity is over-sensitive or his demands extravagant?

The payment of a just wage is the first of the duties declared by the Pope to rest on the employer. It is also the most important, for if observed it will ensure the others. The payment of proper wages will, more than almost anything else, lead to an equitable distribution of wealth among men, and thus bring peace to the world.

Now, it is to be feared that even Catholic employers have sometimes loose notions as to their obligations in this matter. One who remonstrates with an employer for giving a poor wage, may get some such answers as the following: (1) "The money I give and the work I

**Pope Leo XIII. declares the duties of employers.**

**Even Catholic employers have often false notions of their duties.**



get for it are two purely material things. They have nothing to do with conscience or religion. Business is business. Business must be run on business lines"; or, (2) "My money is mine to do what I like with it. No one can dictate to me how I am to use it"; or, (3) "My workman's labour is an article of commerce; I make a bargain with him for it. The State can punish me if I break my agreement, but beyond that, no one has a right to interfere"; or, (4) "My men freely consent to work at my price. Why should I give them more? They do not ask it"; or, (5) "If they are not satisfied with my wages let them go. I can get hundreds delighted to take their places"; or, (6) "My wages are plenty for my men if they are not married. Why should I have to support their families? Their families don't work for me. If a man goes and burdens himself with a wife and family, it is his own look-out; I need not provide for his improvidence"; or (with a philanthropic pose), (7) "I admit my wage is not a very big one. I could afford to give more, but small as it is, it is better than none. If I did not keep my business going my men would probably not get any work at all. In fact I am doing them a service by giving them even this small wage."

Such answers may be thoroughly business-like, but they are thoroughly unchristian. They may have the authority of clever and successful and wealthy men behind them, but they have not the authority of God behind them. They are used in thoughtlessness by Catholics who do not reflect on the false principles implied in them. They are merely odd ends of phrases picked up parrot-like from the literature and speech of the modern commercial world.

This setting up of business principles as principles of morality, this supplanting of the laws of God by the laws of book-keeping is the result of the economic Liberalism which has permeated and has been rotting the whole fabric of our society. The partisans of this school of Liberalism

**These notions  
are inspired  
by modern  
Liberalism.**

tend to deny the existence of moral relations in the labour contract. They hold that the value of work is determined exclusively by the law of supply and demand. According to their principles, if a workman through stress of competition is willing to accept a starvation wage, the employer is justified in giving it. No one, they say, need give more for a thing than its price, and the price of that man's labour, they say, is reduced, just as the price of any article which becomes too common on the market, or which people do not particularly want. Each one, they say, is free to work at any wage he chooses, and none is bound to pay anything beyond the wage which he can get a man to accept.

The principles of this Liberal, or, as it is called in England, "Manchester" School, lead almost inevitably to what is known as "the iron law of wages"—that is, that wages must always remain in or about what is absolutely necessary for the mere subsistence of the labouring class. According to this theory, wages cannot remain for long much above this line, for employers, rivalling each other in cheap production, would bring them down to the line; they cannot keep below this line for long, because if the labouring class diminish in numbers the decrease in the supply of labour will make its price rise again.

Now no Catholic can hold this brutal  
**The Church** view. We cannot hire a horse's strength  
**condemns these** without hiring the horse, nor the steam  
**false notions.** power of an engine without the engine,  
 and so we cannot hire the labourer's  
 energy without hiring the labourer himself—a human  
 being. To have regard, in a labour contract, to the  
 body of a man, his physical strength and health, his  
 purely individual needs, and to abstract from all that  
 is implied in the fact of his being a rational free and  
 social individual, is to treat the labourer as a mere  
 animal—not as a man.

The Catholic cannot so treat his workman. He must remember that his workman is his fellow-

creature, with feelings passions and weaknesses just as he, with like interests and responsibilities, joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, pleasures and pains. Moreover, he must remember that both he and his workmen are children of the same Heavenly Father, that they are both Christians, that is, imitators of Christ, that they are doing the same work on earth, the service of God, and look for the same reward in Heaven.

He will have to remember the words of God in Deuteronomy : "Thou shalt pay the labourer the price of his labour the same day before the going down of the sun, because he is poor and with it maintaineth his life, lest he cry out against thee to the Lord, and it be reputed to thee as a sin," and the words of Ecclesiasticus : "He that defraudeth the poor is a man of blood. He that taketh away the bread earned by sweat is like unto him who killeth his neighbour," and St. Paul's words, "Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you too have a Master in Heaven."

**Pope Leo XIII.** Every Catholic must hear the law of God spoken to him by God's Church, and that law as regards this matter of wages has been, not of course changed, but declared to him more explicitly, and urged more insistently on him by the great Papal Encyclical of 1891. The

following is the passage in it on this matter of a just wage : "A man's labour has two characteristics. First, it is *personal*, inasmuch as the exertion of strength belongs to the individual who puts it forth. Secondly, it is *necessary*, for, without the result of labour a man cannot live, and self-preservation is a law of Nature. Now, if labour be considered in so far as it is personal, it would be within the labourer's right to accept any wage whatever ; for, just as he is free to work or not, he is free to accept a small wage, or no wage at all.

However, the workman's labour is not merely his personal attribute, but it is necessary, and this makes all the difference. The preservation of life is the bounden duty of all. It follows that each has a right to procure what is required to live, and the poor can procure it in no other way than by work and wages." And then, "Though workmen and employers should, as a rule, agree freely as to wages, there is a dictate of natural justice more imperious and more ancient than any labour contract, namely, that wages should be sufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved man. [In another place he speaks of this as a wage that will ensure "a frugal comfort."] If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because the employer will give him no better, he is the victim of force and injustice."

These words are perfectly plain. An employer is not justified in treating his workmen's labour as a marketable commodity, the price of which can be indefinitely reduced by the law of supply and demand.

It is strange that here in Ireland anyone should claim to settle his wages by competition alone. Most of us remember our country convulsed in a civil war when the tenants, backed by almost the whole nation, rose up in protest against the claims of many landlords to get as much money for the use of their land as unrestrained competition would give them. Just as the rack-rent, to which the peasant in despair had to consent, was an act of extortion, so to offer a sweating wage to the labourer, who has no choice but to accept it, is an act of injustice.

The doctrine of the Pope refers to an ordinary unskilled workman. It supposes normal conditions, namely, that the workman be an adult man of ordinary strength, and that he put forth average energy during an ordinary working day. If he were unreliable, or a bungler, or of less than ordinary strength, an employer might, of course, offer him less than the living wage. He should,

**Explanation of  
some points  
in this  
declaration.**

however, give him that proportion of it which his work bears to that of an average man. Moreover, the labourer is supposed to be ordinarily sober and thrifty. The employer need not pay a wage sufficient to provide for the wants of the shiftless or wasteful or drunken workman ; but, on the other hand, he must not assume the practice of any extraordinary thrift or self-denial or the supplement of out-of-hours work.

These points being clear, the doctrine of the Encyclical may be stated as follows: An average workman, even an unskilled one, doing an average day's work, has a strict right in justice to a wage which will assure him a decent livelihood, and he has this right even though, owing to the number of the unemployed ready to take his place, he would be willing to accept much less.

Justice, as you know, implies an equivalence between what is given and what is received. In this case the Pope claims for the labourer's work an intrinsic value based not merely on its objective element—the product of the work, but on a subjective element as well—namely, the personal needs, duties and natural rights of the labourer. A wage, therefore, to be just, must be equal to this intrinsic value of the work. In other words, a wage to be just must give the workman at least that state of comfort which is ordinarily necessary so that he may perform his duties to God and his neighbours. Surely this doctrine must appear reasonable. Every man has a right in justice to at least that amount of the world's goods which will enable him without excessive difficulty to attain the end for which God placed him in the world, namely, to serve God and to fulfil his obligations to those about him. Now, a man cannot without excessive difficulty attain this end unless he gets sufficient to enable him to live in frugal, decent comfort. Under the conditions that exist all over the world at present many have no other means of enjoying such a state of comfort than by

working for wages. Therefore they have a strict right that their wages should be at least sufficient to ensure them this moderate comfort.

Or, to put it in another way. If a thing has been given man primarily for a certain end, its intrinsic utility, its true value or worth, is at least its efficiency for the attaining of that end. Therefore the workman's energy which is given him by God for the acquiring of at least a reasonable state of comfort, has as its equivalent, at least the amount of money which will ensure him that comfort. Consequently, since the poorer classes have no other means, in the present conditions of the world, of obtaining that comfort than by working for wages, every man has a strict right to demand as the equivalent of his labour at least a decent living wage.

That man's strength has been given to him to obtain at least a reasonable well-being is evident. Without such a well-being man could not ordinarily fulfil his duties to God and his neighbour. God would, therefore, be obliging him to perform those duties under normally impossible conditions—which would be an absurd contention.

The Pope gives as a reason why the workman has this strict right to get a decent wage from his employer, the fact that he has no other means of livelihood than work done for wages. This does not mean that the right to a minimum wage comes directly from man's right to live, nor even from a positive and determinate right to work, but that it comes from the natural and necessary character of the labourer's work under present-day conditions which leave him no other means of livelihood than his work. Thus, antecedently to the wage contract, a labourer's right to a proper wage is an imperfect and indeterminate right. He has no right to go to any particular employer and demand work and proper wage. By the wage contract his right becomes determinate and complete, and imposes on the employer a strict obligation to pay the full equivalent of the work, and the wage contract is valid only when such an equivalent is agreed to.

So far the doctrine of the Encyclical is quite plain. A workman must get a wage sufficient to keep him in decent comfort.

But what is "decent comfort"? Is the minimum the workman to be considered with regard to his own purely personal needs, just wage a "family wage" or is he to be considered in his normal or an "individual situation as the head, the provider of a wage"? family? In other words, at least an individual living wage is certainly prescribed as obligatory; but does the Pope go further and prescribe a "family wage"?

By a "family wage" is meant such an amount of money or money's worth as will enable a workman—when helped by his wife working in such a way as not to interfere with her essential duties of motherhood and housekeeping—to enjoy a decent and healthy home; to buy good workday and holiday clothes for himself, his wife and children; to supply them with good food in plenty; to educate his children—an average number of them—till they are of age to do for themselves; to enjoy the comforts and amusements which are usual according to the conditions of life in his class; and to lay by something for the protection of himself and his family against the ordinary accidents of fortune.

It is to be noted, of course, that one and the same amount of money might in one place enable a man to live in content, and in another be a starvation wage. The purchasing power of money and the conventional necessities of life will differ in different countries. In fact, within the same country they will be different in different towns and in different districts, and they will not be the same in the town as in the country side adjoining it. It would be evidently impossible to give, with a view to general guidance any more exact indication of the amount of a family wage than I have given.

As I have said, then, the question arises, is this family wage obligatory in justice?

A "family wage" is due to the workman but it is not certain whether it is due in commutative justice.

The answer is certain. Catholic authorities agree on this, that a full family wage is due to the labourer, that it is wrong, and may be grievously wrong, to withhold it, and that it is due whether the labourer be, as a fact, married or not.

There are, however, Catholic authorities who hold that this family wage is due as a matter of "social justice" or "legal justice," not as a matter of "commutative justice." The existence of this opinion has the practical consequence that when such a wage has not been paid no obligation of restitution can be imposed on the employer.

Furthermore, this "family wage" is not "Family wage" necessarily a "just wage." It is the strict minimum, below which an employer may be less than a "just wage." may not go without injustice when engaging even the least skilled of his hands. He may be obliged in justice to give far more.

The Pope teaches us this when he points to the personal character of the labourer's work. As a personal possession his strength, like any other object he may possess, they be made the matter of a bargain. He may, therefore, go into the labour market, and sell his labour at as high a price as it will fetch. He may unite with other labourers to raise that price.

Such a price, regulated by the laws of supply and demand, but not sinking beneath the level of a family wage, becomes the just price of labour. Thus, then, though an employer, able to pay a family wage, cannot in justice offer less, he may be bound, in justice, to give much more. He cannot give to even the least skilful of his hands less than will enable them to live with their families in reasonable comfort, but he is bound to give his skilled hands (his carpenters, masons, and clerks, for instance,) much more; he is bound to give them the full market price of their services.



In the light of this teaching we see how perverse and unchristian are the answers which I have supposed the employer to make when trying to justify his refusal to pay a proper wage.

But I like to think that such heartless answers would not often be given here in Ireland, where, thank God, the public mind is alive to the obligations of religion. The excuse which Catholic employers in Ireland will most frequently give is a different one.

They will say, "I know that my wages are poor. If I could give better I should be delighted to do so, but I cannot."

This excuse may be quite sufficient or it may not.

In deciding whether such an excuse is sufficient or not in a particular case, we must bear in mind that the doctrine of the Encyclical is stated as a doctrine of natural law, and therefore has reference only to ordinary and normal circumstances. It is liable to modification in extraordinary circumstances.

It lays this obligation of the family wage on an employer only when the general state of the trade in which he is engaged renders such a wage possible. I say "the general state of the trade," because the failure of a particular venture on which an employer embarks, the lessening of his profits, or their slow realisation are not reasons which justify him in reducing his wages below the minimum due in justice. The very notion of wages implies that the workman is not his employer's partner; and therefore, just as he has no right to share the profits which his employer's extraordinary cleverness or good luck might produce, so he cannot be made to suffer losses due to his employer's bad management or bad luck.

If, however, the business in general is in a bad condition, owing to some industrial crisis, or owing to the abnormally low vitality of the commerce of the country, so that employers carry on at a loss or with small profits, they would be free in conscience to give less than the minimum family wage; nay, it might be a charity

for them to give a less wage rather than send their workmen a-begging.

When, therefore, a man says that he cannot pay a family wage he may have a perfectly legitimate excuse. If he cannot he is not bound. No one is bound to do the impossible.

But it would be well to press him a little, so as to find out a little more clearly from him what he means by saying that he cannot.

If he means that the general state of his business is so bad that it leaves him only a small profit on his capital, that his profits just enable him to keep in the social rank in which he is established, that they just supply him, when living economically, with the means to house and clothe and educate his family in a decent way, conformable to the state of life he has come to regard as his, then his excuse is valid.

**Explanation  
of this.**

A moment's consideration will show the reason of this.

The absolute necessities of life of any two men are about the same, food to eat and some kind of housing and clothes to protect them from the weather. But there are other things which are called (and rightly called) necessities—they are known as conventional necessities—and these differ greatly for individuals according to their different positions in the social order. It is clear that the employer or business man, owing to his up-bringing, his education, his habits of life, the scale of expenditure to which he has been always accustomed, or to which he has grown accustomed, comes to regard, and is right in regarding, as necessary for him many things beyond the means of bare livelihood. These necessities for his decent livelihood will include more of the good things of the world than what a working-man would consider necessary for a decent livelihood in his class. If such men were deprived of this larger, more splendid, more comfortable style of existence, they would feel, not as if they were merely disappointed in ambition, but would feel themselves pinched and straitened and depressed beneath their

normal and proper standard of living, just as the labourer, who does not get a family wage, feels that he is forced to live below his proper and normal state of decency and comfort.

Now, both the employer and his workman have, in the abstract, equal rights to get from the profits of the business the means of enjoying a proper comfort, each according to his state in life; but if the profits of the business are not sufficient to satisfy the rights of both, the employer may, of these two rights, each equally good, prefer that of himself to that of his workman. He is quite justified in so doing.

Consequently a man who, owing to a generally bad state of trade, sees that if he gives a family wage he may have to give up business, or at least fall from his normal position in the world, can plead with truth that he cannot give it. He may then pay a smaller one, though of course he is bound to pay as much of the full family wage as he can afford in the sense I have explained.

**This plea of  
inability often  
valid**

Owing to the wretched state of Irish trade it often happens that employers, especially those in a small way of business, can quite justly plead inability to pay a family wage. It sometimes, however, happens that such a one when he pleads inability, really means something very different.

**but often invalid.**

He may say, for instance, "I should like to pay my hands better, but I cannot. My first duty is to myself and my children. I wish to rise out of the social rank in which I am. I wish to get on in the world like my neighbours"; or he may say, "I am going to extend my business and open out new lines, and for this purpose I have to reduce working expenses, and especially my wage bill, to the lowest," or "I have some profitable investments in view for which every penny I can save is important. I cannot, therefore, pay my hands properly yet."

Such excuses are quite invalid. If the labourer had to wait for his proper wage until his employer's social

ambitions or desire of wealth were fully satisfied he would have to wait for ever.

The right of a working-man to a decent livelihood is a higher and more imperative right than the right of his employer to advance his family in the social order.

No employer can defraud his labourers of their just wage in order to lead what for him would be an extravagant and luxurious style of life, or in order to acquire capital for fresh investments. He undoubtedly has the right to pursue his worldly ambitions, to improve his social and economic condition, to raise his style of living, to indulge in more expensive housing, equipages and amusements, to give a more expensive schooling to his children, but he acquires that right only after he has acquitted himself of his obligations of justice; and one of these is the proper remuneration of his employees; until he can pay them a family wage he must limit his expenses to what is necessary for maintaining himself and his family in decent comfort in their present station in life.

**An example.** An example not quite parallel, but sufficiently so, will help to bring home the reasonableness of this. Let us suppose that a merchant owes a large sum of money. His creditor has a strict right in justice to get the money and presses for payment. To his astonishment the merchant says to him, "I am very sorry to disappoint you, but I cannot pay you at present. I am about to extend my business and set up on a larger scale. After some time I have no doubt but that I shall be able to pay you more easily"; or perhaps he says: "I cannot pay you now. I am saving up all the money I can to invest it in an affair that has been recommended to me. When I shall have made money out of this investment I will pay you." If the merchant answered thus he would doubtless be brought into court and forced to pay his creditor, and quite rightly too. Though he has undoubtedly the right to pursue his ambitious schemes, he must pay his lawful debts first.

**Why the Pope speaks chiefly of employers' duties.**

The reason why it has been necessary to speak at some length of the duties of employers, especially in the matter of wages, is first, that the Pope in his Encyclical on labour has thought it necessary to dwell at length on this point; and, secondly, that the false principles of Liberalism are in the very air we breathe, and infect the principles of Catholics. Catholic employers may, therefore, be doing great harm to society, and committing great injustice, and yet may not realise or even advert to the harm or the injustice.

On the other hand, though workmen have their grave duties to their employers, and though they, too, are guilty of much injustice, it has not been thought necessary to dilate upon their duties or their crimes, because this occasion is one on which instruction rather than exhortation is intended, and because workmen, when they act unjustly, generally know perfectly well that they are doing so.

**Duties of workers.**

The Pope, when instructing the world on this labour question, lays down very shortly the obvious and clear duties of the workman. In his words they are "to perform wholly and faithfully the work which has been equitably agreed on; not to injure masters in their property or persons; to abstain from acts of violence even in defence of their rights; and never to turn their demands into disturbance."

**In Ireland few workers have incorrect or Socialistic notions of their duties,**

Now, workmen in Ireland know perfectly well these plain duties. There are few real Socialists among Irish workmen. There are some who imagine themselves Socialists, but who have no correct notion of what Socialism is. Some call themselves Socialists because their sense of humanity condemns the contrasts of ostentatious luxury and squalid destitution in the world about them. To condemn such contrasts is not Socialism—God condemns them and His Church condemns

them. Many call themselves Socialists because they wish for certain reforms in the state of the poor, reforms which the Catholic Church is more anxious for than any Socialist. Some would wish the State or Municipalities to take over the providing of many things of common utility, cheap houses for the poor, bread, milk, and some other things, and imagine that this is Socialism. Such schemes have sometimes succeeded (notably in the hands of Catholic Municipalities, as that of Vienna), at other times they have failed. They may be wise or not as economic projects, but assuredly they do not constitute Socialism.

We in Ireland, rich or poor, have no real leaning to Socialism. We are all attached to the principle of ownership; and if there is one thing more than another which we think it right and natural to own, it is land, the very first thing which Socialism would remove from private ownership. The Irish workman wants to have his own house, his own piece of land, if possible; he wishes for full authority in his own family, he clings to his legitimate liberties, liberty of personal action, liberty to practise his religion, liberty to educate his children as his conscience directs, liberty to associate with his fellows for his protection, liberty to make bargains, liberty to leave his little property to those he wishes; and he has no objection to others, richer than himself, possessing the same rights and liberties. He only objects to others using their wealth to injure him, or to their so monopolising the wealth of the world, as to deprive him of his proper comfort, and in all this he has the instincts of a true Catholic.

No! the Irish working-classes are not really perverted by any Socialist or Anarchist principles. Of course they may, and often do go astray in matters of detail, for instance with regard to the rights or wrongs of a particular quarrel with employers, or of a particular strike, but as regards general principles, they have perfectly correct notions of their duties and rights.

**but they often  
act unjustly** Therefore when labourers in Ireland commit injustice they commit it mostly with their eyes open ; at least if their eyes are blinded, it is by passion, and not by false teaching.

From this there follow two consequences : first, that employers, who—as I have said, often through thoughtlessness or ignorance—make an ill use of their power are responsible for much of the sin and injustice on the part of their workmen, and thus it is all the more necessary to teach them or remind them of their duties ; secondly, that the Church is called on to condemn severely the workmen for the crimes against justice which they commit with such full consciousness of their guilt.

**and the Church  
severely  
condemns  
them.** This duty she has never shirked, and she can perform this duty in Ireland with the more freedom and outspokenness because she has always been—and the Irish poor know that she has always been—their protector against oppression.

She, therefore, must condemn and threaten, with all the authority that God gives her, the workman who is deceitful, envious, vengeful. She must condemn the unscrupulous demagogues who go about fomenting disturbance and rousing the working-class to evil courses which will not serve their true interests in this world, and will endanger their bodies and souls in the next. She must condemn the labourers who in receipt of fair wages scamp their work, or waste time, or will not work except under supervision, or injure their employers' machinery or materials, or make unreasonable demands, or go on strike needlessly or without proper warning, or have recourse to violence in striving to redress their rights.

**In this the  
Church is  
acting for the  
interests of all.** In checking the evil passions of the working-class the Church is working for the regeneration of all society, and not least for the welfare of the workers themselves ; for surely they will more easily win their rights if they claim

them with the irresistible voice of Unions—Unions which are strong, firmly knit, based on solid principles, conscious of a just cause and acting with a deep sense of responsibility, Unions that will promise—and get employers to believe them when they promise—that they will give honest work for fair wages.

The wealth of the world, on which **Prosperity of all classes to be sought in the practice of justice on the part of all.** the whole human race has to subsist, is the product of two forces, Labour and Capital. Social order should come not so much from an even balance of these two powers opposing each other—though such a balance is necessary—as from their harmonious working together. Each performs a necessary function. Each is indispensable to the other. Neither is the enemy of the other nor yet its servant. Each has duties to the other, and the prosperity of the world depends on the discharge of these duties. Such is the ordinance of God who made society. God, in the words of St. Paul writing to the Ephesians, speaks to both of these great parties. He speaks first to the Christian workmen: “Be obedient to them that are your masters in the simplicity of your hearts as to Christ, not serving to the eye as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart . . . knowing that whatsoever good thing any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord”; and then he speaks to masters: “And you, masters, do the same things to them, forbearing to threaten, knowing that the Lord both of them and of you is in Heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with Him.”



## “THE CHURCH AND THE WORKING WOMAN.”

**Great number  
of  
wage-earning  
women to-day.**

**I**N hardly any respect does our modern industrial system contrast more sharply or more unfavourably with the past than in the enormous number of women whom it forces to work for wages.

In most countries from 30 per cent. to 40 per cent. of the total number of women have to work thus. In Ireland if we reckon those who work in factories and workshops, those who work for hire on farms or in farm-houses, those who work in their homes at goods to be sold in shops, household servants, those engaged as clerks or shop assistants, those who are occupied in teaching or in the public service, there cannot be less than three-quarters of a million of women in receipt of wages.

Clearly therefore the question of women's work, its conditions and remuneration, concerns the vital interests of society.

**Law of work  
universal**

When God imposed on our first parents the law of work He not merely inflicted it as a penance on the race, He ordained

it as the way in which the race was to develop and fulfil the objects of its existence.

**but different  
in its  
application to  
men and women.**

Now, as there is a difference between the functions which men perform and those which women perform in the development of the race and in the promoting of its welfare, it is clear that the law of work, though it binds all human beings, has a different application to men and to women. Hence any application of

that law of work which would be incompatible with women's nature—for instance, the imposing on women of work which by its character or by its severity would endanger women's social functions—would be contrary to God's ordinance and would be essentially wrong.

Again the Creator indicates the natural and normal spheres of man's work and of woman's work when He said to the man, "Cursed is the earth in thy work. With labour and toil shall it bring forth bread for thee," and to the woman, "in sorrow and pain shalt thou bring forth thy children." To the man he assigns external work, the production of wealth; to the woman, motherhood and its consequences, home work and the training of her children.

**Home is the normal sphere of woman's work,** As Pope Leo XIII. declares—"A woman is by nature suited for home work. This it is which is best adapted to preserve her modesty and secure the good up-bringing of her children and the well-being of the family."

The home is, therefore, the normal sphere of woman's activities, but it does not follow that every work outside that sphere is unjust. She is often called on, and even bound, to work outside this, her normal sphere.

**though she has always to some extent worked outside her home,** In all periods of the world's history there have been certain kinds of work which women, especially unmarried women, have done outside their own homes. As soon as slavery disappeared the workwoman and the maidservant appeared. Even in the heyday of the Christian ages there were women's work-guilds, chiefly for the making of linen and of women's clothes, and in all ages and places much of the easier kinds of work connected with agriculture have been done by women working for wages.

**and especially to-day is forced to do so.** Moreover the growth of modern industry has removed from beneath the family roof most of the occupations that kept the housewife busy in days gone by. The steam loom has made the spindle and distaff

useless, the workshop has lessened the work of the needle, factories and shops have ruined the old-time art of house-keeping. The home now tends to be the place where one merely sleeps and eats, not the place where one works. The poor woman and the rich woman alike procure from outside the things which of old they used to make themselves, but the poor woman has to go forth to gain by her wages the means of procuring those things. What she used to make in her house she now makes outside it, or she makes its equivalent in her wages. She has not ceased to work. She has only changed her place of work.

Also, it seems as if the necessities of life require women to work more than they used to in the past. It is true that the average wages of men have risen during the 19th century by about 75 per cent., while in the same time the price of food has only risen by about 40 per cent., while the prices of most manufactured articles have gone down to half of what they were. But, on the other hand, it is to be remembered that the machine-made goods of to-day are not as durable as the handmade ones of the past, that the price of lodging seems to have greatly increased, that unemployment takes from the nominal value of the higher wages of to-day, and (most important of all) that the progress of the world has created many new needs, new requirements of hygiene and food, new amusements, new comforts, the absence of which, though not felt as a grievance by those of two or three generations ago, would be an intolerable grievance for even the poor of to-day.

The poor woman then has to work. **Such work is often her duty.** If she has no one to support her, the case is clear. If she is married, she is her husband's "help," to use the word of Genesis. If then her husband fail, in whole or in part, to fulfil his natural function of the provider, she, the co-founder of the house, the partner, on whom equally with her husband God lays the responsibility of the family, must take up the task.

Often, too, perhaps, indeed, most often, the wife even of the strong workingman is forced to work in order to

supplement her husband's wages. This, of course, simply means that men, the proper providers of the home, very commonly do not receive a family wage. If they did their wives could confine themselves to their house-work; and, as a fact, where such a family wage is given, it is nearly always found to be the case that the wife does remain at home, and finds abundant occupation in her home duties.

This consequence of our social progress, the going forth of the woman from her home to work, is, as I have said, abnormal, but it is certainly not opposed to the law of work as applied to women.

**The effects of such work are often ruinous** It may, however, be opposed to it in its effects, and, alas! often is. The inhuman Liberalism, that has inspired the commercial world since the Industrial Revolution, has made the history of woman's labour, especially in the first half of the 19th century, one of the darkest and most disgraceful pages in human history. Public humanity has insisted, in defiance of Liberalistic principles, on the passing of many laws to restrain the abuses practised on woman workers, but even yet their condition remains more than an abnormality, it is a social heresy.

Even where all the requirements of the labour laws are conscientiously observed, where precautions are taken against imposing on women work unsuited to them, where the dangers to morality health and sobriety are guarded against—and I am confident that Catholic employers fulfil their obligations in this matter—even then there still remain (it cannot be denied) certain evils inherent in the very nature of the factory and the workshop, evils which do considerable harm, moral and physical, to women workers.

**especially in breaking up the family.** Then, again, the solidity of the family is gravely compromised by the absence of the woman, and especially of the wife, from the home. The family is the centre of every man's life, the consolation of his heart, the motive force of his work, the fruitful source of future generations, the

pledge for the continuance and prosperity of the State. And the woman is even more than the man the very soul of the family. Remove her and the principle of unity of the home is broken, individuals will suffer and deteriorate, the State will disintegrate and decay.

**Even home-work** Modern industry not merely wrecks  
**often ruinous.** many homes by driving woman forth  
**“Sweating** to work. It has managed to blight and  
**system.”** destroy many homes even while leaving  
 the woman in them. There are wealthy men, or large companies of men, owning manufactories or large shops who get much work done by women working in their own homes. One would expect that in all fairness such women should be better paid than if they were working in a factory or workshop, for they save their employers heavy expenses of lighting heating rent and the hygienic conditions required by the law. Yet such poor women are the very slaves and drudges of the modern world. They work under conditions which cannot be so easily regulated by the protective agencies of the State; they do not benefit by even the attenuated bonds of human sympathy that unite the owner of a factory with his hands; they are less able to unite for their mutual protection; they are the first to suffer by having their work taken from them, or their wages cut down at the slightest depression in trade; they are completely at the mercy of unscrupulous employers.

Thus has arisen that awful “sweating system” which is crying to Heaven for vengeance on our society, that hideous exploitation of women, with its cruel killing work, its inhuman hours, its hunger, its heart-breaking, its despair, its diabolical temptations, its slow murder of children and women.

**Other evil** Shameful exploitation of women is  
**effects of** one result of economic Liberalism; there  
**modern** is another result not much less of a curse.  
**industrialism** Woman, kept from her proper duties,  
**on women.** has had her views of life falsified, her  
 ambitions set in a wrong direction.

In pressing women into the rough and tumble fight for

existence, in putting before her, as her ideal, the modern virago instead of the gentle maid of Nazareth, in setting her up not as a help but as a rival of man, the modern world is working its ruin. We see the result. The children of the present generation have not the respect for their parents, nor the obedience to them which even the last generation had. We are alarmed at the increasing frequency of divorce and at the increasing contempt for the marriage bond, while the whole state of our society tends directly to this. Society is crumbling, collapsing because the bonds of charity and justice and family duty are strained and loosening.

**The Church's  
anxiety for  
the working  
woman.**

It is the work of the Church to-day, as of old, to reform society so that all may enjoy a state of Christian contentment and may serve God in peace; and to no part of that work does she apply more energy and earnestness than to the reconstitution of family life, and to the saving of woman from the dangers that threaten her dignity and her position and functions in society.

**The Church  
reminds  
employers of  
their duties to  
their women  
workers,**

First, the Church raises her voice in warning to individual consciences. She recalls to employers their solemn duties of justice with regard to the women who work for them; she threatens with God's eternal anger those who put women at work unsuited to them, those who manage their factories or workshops or offices or households so as to prejudice the morality or the health of their women workers; she recalls to the minds of shareholders that they have responsibilities with regard to those poor women whom they have never seen, but from whose labour they get their dividends. She reminds all employers of women's work, shopkeepers, manufacturers, owners of workshops, managers of offices, mistresses of households, everyone who directly employs women, or who, as shareholders in companies, appoint representatives to employ them—she reminds all such of their strict obligation to pay a decent wage.

**and especially of their duty to pay a just wage.** It is with regard to this last point, to the matter of wages, that Catholic employers, as well as others, have most to reproach themselves, and it is therefore necessary to show how the authoritative word of the Church, the great Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII., applies to women's work in particular.

**An individual living wage due in justice to the woman worker.** It is perfectly certain from the words of the Encyclical that an employer is bound as a matter of strict commutative justice to pay his man-labourer at least an individual living wage, that is, one that will supply all his individual and personal wants. It is also certain that a woman worker has a strict right in justice to a similar wage, one sufficient for her personal and individual needs. As to whether a woman's needs are less than those of a man, and consequently as to whether her individual living wage may be lower than a man's, I shall say a word afterwards.

The reasons which render an individual living wage obligatory are identical in the case of a man and a woman. Both have, when poor, no other means of livelihood than wages received for work. Both have therefore a strict right that these wages should be enough to keep them in decent and proper comfort.

**A family wage not so due to her.** As I said last day, it is certain (though not from the Encyclical) that an employer is, in the case of his man-labourer, bound to pay more than this individual wage, that he is bound to pay him a family wage. A woman, however, has no right to this family wage, as she is not the normal and natural provider of her family.

The lowest wage therefore which an employer can offer in security of conscience to his adult woman worker, of average strength, even quite unskilled, is a wage that will assure her decent housing and clothes, good food, and something over to brighten her present life with some joy, and her future with some hope. The law of supply and demand may raise the just price of her work

above this vital minimum, but must not drive it lower.

**Employers often do not admit their obligation to pay an individual living wage to their female hands,**

Of course this principle of humanity and justice is denied by the unscrupulous employer—and there are many such—who holds himself at liberty to pay his women any wretched wage which their desperate necessities may drive them to accept. He scouts the idea of any obligation in justice as it would deprive him of the commercial advantages which he enjoys in dealing with his women,

advantages much greater than those which he enjoys when dealing with his men.

**and take advantage of women's weakness to exploit them.**

Women are more at their employer's mercy than men. They are more resigned to their misery than men. They have, compared with men, little taste or talent for agitation and organisation. They are more divided by class distinctions.

They distrust each other more. More generous than men in every other respect, in this they are more self-centred.

They are more easily cowed by bullying, and more frightened by fear of the consequences of resistance. They have not the fighting spirit of men. Their very fidelity and family affection often increase their helplessness. If they have a little sister or brother, or aged parent or sick husband to support, they will suffer any privation, put up with any wretched pittance rather than jeopardise the interests of those dear to them. Besides, many of them looking on work as a temporary necessity from which they hope to be freed by marriage, do not go through any apprenticeship, or seriously qualify themselves by technical training in a skilled trade. For all these reasons they are almost quite unable to form Unions, the only efficacious defence of the labouring classes against exploitation.

No wonder then that women's work being left at the mercy of economic laws is wretchedly remunerated, and



that the vast majority of the sweated industries are women's industries.

**Theories some-  
times advanced  
to defend  
underpayment  
of women.**

**(A) woman's  
work is less  
valuable than  
man's work.**

**The axiom  
"Equal pay  
for equal  
work"**

There are some principles invoked to defend the underpayment of women against the charges of injustice and cruelty.

It is often said for instance that women's work is not equal to that of men and is therefore to be less well paid.

You all know the axiom "Equal work deserves equal pay." The accurate meaning of it is, that two people doing in the same time the same amount of work in an equally good way should be equally remunerated.

Such a principle appears to be just. It is appealed to even by the employers of sweated labour. Such men, where piecework is done in the homes of the workers, generally give exactly the same price for an article whether made by a man or a woman. Though such an employer invokes the principle because it suits his interests, and though the wage he gives to both men and women is shamefully unjust, still his contention that he need not pay the man more than the woman for the same work seems fair. Or again, if a man gets 3s. for a day's work why should a woman get only 1s. for the same day's work done equally well?

**though not  
universally  
true**

Yet the formula "Equal wage for equal work" just and fair as it appears, is not to be taken as expressing a universal obligation in justice.

You will easily see how this is so. The minimum living wage must be paid to every worker, but the amount between this minimum and the just wage varies, and is to be determined by the higgling of the market. For instance, both an unskilled labourer and a plumber must get their minimum wage; but the just wage of a plumber is raised by the circumstances of the labour market beyond the just wage of the unskilled workman.

Now, in the same way, the higgling of the market may run up the rate of man's wages above the rate of woman's wages. An employer is bound to give his woman employee at least a living wage. He is bound to pay her what may be more. He is to give her the just price of her labour, but the higgling of the market may leave this just price of woman's labour at a lower point than the current price of the same work done by a man. Consequently in the numerous occupations, such as those of shop-assistants, clerks, servants, teachers, where it may happen that a woman's work is quite equally effective as that of a man, and yet brings in a wage very inferior to that of a man, we may hold that the woman's inferior wage is not *necessarily* unjust. Also, if an employer dismiss a man, and take on at a smaller wage a woman who can do the work equally well, he is not necessarily to be condemned off-hand for injustice.

He may, of course, be compelling the woman to undertake work unsuited to her sex or strength, or the inferior wage given her may be less than the just wage, or even less than the minimum living wage—in all which cases he will be committing a grave sin of injustice—but there will not be any injustice in the mere fact of his giving her a smaller wage than he has been giving the man whom she replaces.

Many trades, or many departments of certain trades, which were once in the hands of men, have passed into women's hands owing to the willingness of women to accept lower wages than men would put up with. In some of these cases the work is unsuited to women, and the employers who so transferred the work from men to women acted unjustly. In other cases the work is not unsuited to women, and the employers in thus replacing men by women are not guilty of any injustice if they pay their women a proper wage. It is to be feared, however, that such replacing of men's labour by women's labour has generally taken place simply because women could be got to work at a wage below the limit of justice, a wage that men would not accept.

As a general rule however, the work in which men are engaged and the work in which women are engaged are quite distinct from each other, and so different in character that employers can generally deny that they remunerate work differently according to the sex of the worker.

**is in general  
a principle  
of justice**

I have said that the principle of equal pay for equal work is not one of universal application. Still it is in the main a principle of justice and fair play. If it could be impressed on the public conscience as a rough working rule it would do much to check the shameful exploitation of woman's labour, and it would put some restraint on the very widespread abuse of paying even highly-skilled women less than quite unskilled men.

**(as is also a  
corollary of it)**

A corollary of this principle is that, where two workers, or two classes of workers, contribute by different operations to the production of an article, the relation between their wages should be roughly equal to the relation between their shares in the production of the article. Such a principle would be, of course, generally unworkable as a practical guide, for the importance of the co-operation of any worker or set of workers is generally impossible to estimate; still it would be easy to show that this principle of fair-play is flagrantly violated in many industries. It is often the case that women perform all the important and laborious processes in the production of certain goods, and that men performing some quite subsidiary and easy process, carry off the lion's share of the wages.

**A woman's  
work is often  
less valuable  
than a man's.**

The principle of equal pay for equal work would be, I say, a rough criterion as to the observance of justice in the payment of wages.

For instance, in the case of unskilled work, though a man has a right to a family wage and a woman a right only to a personal living wage, the relation between these two wages probably would roughly represent the relation between the quantity of work done by each. Not merely,

however, in those kinds of labour which demand physical strength, but in those which merely call for accuracy, sureness of touch, despatch, and even in occupations such as the tending of a shop or the keeping of accounts, it is found by experience that a man's labour is generally (though by no means always) superior in various respects to that of a woman. The difference between their wages may sometimes roughly represent their comparative efficiency, though it is unfortunately quite certain that far more often it is due merely to the greater ease with which women's labour can be exploited.

**(B) "A woman's wage is only a supplementary wage."** A second theory—which we may call "the theory of supplementary wages"—is often advanced by employers to defend themselves from the charge of cruelty or injustice. The theory is this, that a woman's wage need not be big because it is only a supplement of her husband's or her father's wage.

Some carry this theory very far. The daughter, they say, lives on her father's wages, the wife on her husband's, and if either of them take it into her head to work, it is not through necessity, but in order to get pocket-money or to indulge in superfluous pleasures.

If such were the case, namely, that a woman works merely to obtain superfluous luxuries, it would undoubtedly follow that no injustice would be done in remunerating such work by a diminutive salary. To use the words of the Pope, her work would be merely "personal" and therefore it "would be within the labourer's right to accept any rate of wages whatsoever," and it would be within the employer's right to haggle over the rate of her wages as he would haggle over the price of an article in a shop.

**This is sometimes true** Undoubtedly, too, it does happen sometimes that a young woman takes a position as a shop assistant or a clerk simply in order to provide herself with pocket-money. Also a young woman who is easily supported by her father may take up lace-making or some industry of the kind to enrich her wardrobe, or to have more money to spend

in amusing herself. Indeed this is (in some places at least) common enough among the daughters of well-to-do people, and even of people in a higher station of life. They sell their work cheap, and are too "grand" to haggle over its price, forgetting in their selfishness or thoughtlessness that, few as they are, they are doing a real injury to their less fortunate sisters by depressing the price of such work. It sometimes happens that a workingman's wife when her household work is over may do a little work to enrich the household stock, though she stand in no need of doing so.

Such "amateur" workers may be indeed, absolutely speaking, fairly numerous, but compared to the countless multitudes who work through dire necessity, they are a mere handful. To imagine that the womankind of the wage-earning classes do work as a dilettante occupation is to deliberately shut one's eyes to the realities of the world about one.

There are other employers who do not push this theory quite so far. They admit that women have to work through necessity, but they say that, as their fathers or husbands are earning wages—insufficient but still wages—a small wage, earned by the daughter or the wife, will bring up the family budget to what is enough for the comfort of the family, and that, therefore, a small wage is not an unjust one in the case of women.

**but generally  
false and  
cannot be  
acted on by  
employer.** It is, of course, far from being the case that every woman has either a husband or a father working to support her. Many have neither the one nor the other, but even in the case of those who have the one or the other this plea of the employer will not avail him.

When a married woman works for an employer, her employer is bound, as a matter of justice, to give her, not what will bring her husband's wage up to the level of a family wage—her husband's wage is no concern of her employer—but what would keep her, even if unmarried, in decent comfort. The fact that she has a husband has nothing to do with her employer. What

he has to remember is this, that she gives him her work, that she has a right in strict justice to get from him the value of it, and that that value, as we have seen, is her individual living wage.

With regard to the grown girl who lives in her father's house, the case is stronger still. If her father partly supports her it is more than he is bound in justice to do. The family wage, to which I have shown that her father is entitled, is only what will enable him to bring up his children till they are of age to work for themselves. No one ever dreamt that it should be sufficient to support a family of girls indefinitely, or until they get married; and the employer if it were a question of paying the girl's father would be first to scout such a ridiculous idea.

You see how contradictory is the position which some employers adopt. On the one hand, they say they need not give anything to their man-labourer beyond his personal wage, that they need not give him anything for the support of his family. On the other hand, when asked to pay a member of his family they say they have already paid for the support of that member. They cannot have it both ways. They cannot enjoy the advantages which would be theirs if they paid a family wage—indeed, which would be theirs only if they paid much more than a family wage—and, at the same time, refuse to pay such a wage.

Therefore when the daughter of a workingman grows up, say to the age of 18 or 19, and is able to do an adult woman's work, she ought not to be dependent on her father's work, and her employer has no right to take advantage of her father's willingness to encumber his little budget with her support. She works for her employer and has a right to get the value of her work, and that value is at the least what would support her (even if she got nothing from her father) in frugal comfort.

For the vast majority of women earning wages, their earnings mean for them food, clothes, housing, the necessaries of life. It might be laid down as a general principle that an employer must always consider every grown girl or woman, whose labour is to be had in the

labour market, as one who works through necessity; that he is not therefore at liberty to beat down her wages as low as he can; that she has a right to demand, and does in fact demand—no matter what in her timidity or shame she may say to the contrary—the full value of her work, and that that value is at the least what would maintain her in reasonable comfort.

For consider the classes of women who work. The majority are probably unmarried girls who are too old to remain a burden on their father's slender resources. They have no one on whom they can depend, and too often (as in Ireland where the marriage rate is lower than almost anywhere in Europe) have little prospect of finding a husband to support them. Multitudes, too, are widows, often with young families to feed and clothe and house upon their earnings.

Lastly, there are the married women whom the goad of necessity drives forth to work. If the husband got a family wage his wife would not—at least generally would not—have to do anything but mind her house. But a family wage is, to say the least, not universal outside the ranks of skilled and organised labourers who can force it from their employers, and therefore the married woman is often forced to eke out her husband's wages by her own hard work. We must remember, too, that her wages so earned, even if they bring up the total family earnings to the level of a family wage, are always eaten into by the wastage and the many expenses which are entailed by her absence from home.

How often, indeed, are the needs of the wife equal to those of her unmarried or of her widowed sister! Her husband is often not a model. His wages often go into the till of the publican or the pocket of the betting agent. He may be an incapable workman unable to find employment, or he may be thrown out of work by the crises that so often occur in trade, or he may be disabled or sick for lengthy periods. If his wife is to be treated as a supplementary wage-earner, how can she face the heavy responsibilities which then devolve on her?

(C) "A woman's needs are less than a man's." A man, as we have seen, has a right to a wage which will enable him to support himself and his family. A woman on the other hand has a right only to the smaller wage which will ensure her own personal support. But some employers, ignoring the obligations of the workmen's family wage, and paying them a wage which would just suffice to support them individually, pay women workers much less still, on the ground that women's needs are less than those of men.

This contention is, as a general rule, true. **How far this is the case.** Woman eats less and drinks less than a man and she does not smoke. But in all else, lodging, dress and the rest, she has much the same expenses as a man. Moreover, there often exist circumstances which tend to bring her needs up towards the level of men's needs. If she work at home for instance she has heavy expenses of light and heating from which a man working outside or in a factory is exempt. Then, too, if she be married her work is interrupted from time to time by prolonged absences which bring down the value of her nominal wage. Then again in certain occupations she has to dress with a regard to style and elegance, which entails expenses from which the soberer and more constant style of men's clothes exempts them.

There is probably not such a big difference between men's and women's needs as certain interested people would have us believe. A woman's food and drink—I suppose habits of ordinary sobriety—will account for about three-fourths of her wage. On the other hand, a woman's food and drink ought not normally to be less than three-quarters of a man's. Supposing that a woman's other needs are equal to a man's—and we have seen that they are often greater—this would mean that her total needs would be four-fifths of a man's. Even putting her food at two-thirds of a man's, her needs would still be eight-elevenths of a man's. Yet we know that in most trades she never gets four-fifths or even eight-elevenths, but at most two-thirds or half of a man's wage. If in such trades the man were getting a family wage such a



disproportion might not be excessive, but he very often does not get a family wage, and this disproportion simply means that the woman is not getting nearly enough. Indeed I have not put the woman's case strongly enough, for you will all know of cases where she does not get even half of what an unskilled man will get.

**Woman's weakness the main cause of her oppression.** The real fact which cannot be blinked, is that a woman's wage is so low compared to a man's, not because her needs are so much less, but because her power of self-protection is less, because she can be exploited much more easily than a man.

**When can employers justly plead inability to pay a proper wage to women?** There are in Ireland I know, thank God, conscientious employers who pay their women workers a proper wage. All honour to them, and God's blessing be on them for resisting the temptations that beset them and the bad examples that are about them. There are others that do not pay a proper wage. If such men say that they cannot afford this wage they are adopting a more reasonable line of defence than the ones I have referred to. They may or may not be justified in alleging their inability to pay a proper wage. It may often happen in Ireland that small employers are so justified. I gave in the preceding lecture the principles by which in any particular case this plea of inability is to be judged valid or invalid.

**Those who can pay a proper wage and do not are guilty of sin.** It however requires only a slight acquaintance with the world about us to see that there are employers who grow rich and very rich on the sweated labour of women, and who could therefore quite well afford to pay them a proper wage, and yet do not pay it. Such men have no excuse. They are robbing their women workers. They are safe indeed from the police court, safe because laws have not yet been framed—as they assuredly will be in the near future—to render such injustice impossible, but not safe from the wrath of God; and all their social or commercial power will not avail them, when, at the

hour of their death, God will avenge on them the sufferings of their victims.

**The Church most anxious to safeguard family life and to protect women workers** The Church, therefore, intervenes to protect women's just rights. She speaks, first of all, to individual employers, telling them their duties to their women-workers, and threatening them with God's wrath if they neglect their duties.

Again, in the Encyclicals of her Popes, Leo XIII. and Pius X., in the letters of her Bishops, in the sermons of her priests, in the books of her authors, the Church is incessantly calling on States and Statesmen to pass laws which may preserve family life and safeguard the dignity of women and her functions in society against the pressure of industrial competition. This is one of the first objects of every Catholic political party in the Parliaments of the Continent.

**calls on all Christians,** You all remember that beautiful page in the Gospel where we read that Christ, gazing on the multitude in the desert, says: "I have compassion on this multitude, because they are with Me now twelve days and have not what to eat. I will not send them away fasting lest they faint by the way." And then we read how He took the five loaves and the fishes, and multiplying them by His omnipotence, fed the four thousand men, besides women and children.

Oh! may Catholics lay to heart the lessons which Christ then wished to reach; may they learn to think of the poor, to pity them, to help them, and especially the poor women who cannot so easily help themselves.

Christ dwelt on the sufferings of these poor people in the desert. He felt in imagination their hunger. He foresaw their fainting by the way as they dragged themselves wearily back to their villages. How little do we think of the poor about us! How little we know of them! We see them in the streets. If their poverty was a passing inconvenience we might do something, but, because it is a clinging cloud of sorrow that chills and darkens their whole lives from cradle to grave, we merely throw them an alms—a kind of gesture of despair—and turn

to think of pleasanter things. The poor live in the next street to us, and we know as little of them as if they lived in some distant country. We do not reflect on their feelings, their sufferings, their fears, their resources, their difficulties, their temptations.

Christ teaches us to pity the poor. "*Misereor super hanc turbam.*" "I have pity on this multitude." He has made men to help each other and in order to help they must first have love and pity. "By this shall all men know that you are My Disciples, that you love one another." The words seem almost ironical. How seldom do we prove in that way that we are His Disciples! How often it happens that we do not act as Christians! What do I say? How often we do not act as human beings should act! We care only for those of our household. But even the brute beasts love their offspring and their parents. It is man's privilege and his duty to embrace in his love those outside his home.

Christ teaches us to help the poor. Sad indeed would be the state of the poor were it not for the poor, for it is the poor who help the poor most often. Very beautiful is the sight of the poor giving to the poor, but it is a sad sight too, for it forces one to reflect that many who could more easily give, and should give, do not give. All of us can give something.

God gave some men wealth, but it is wealth burdened by many debts, debts of justice and of charity. The owners of wealth are not its absolute owners. They are only its stewards, and will have to account to God for every penny of it. An honest man will refrain from taking money that does not belong to him. "God has not given it to me," he says. Yet he will often cling fiercely to that which is his, and will feel wronged if God, who has given it all to him, asks back a small part of it as charity for His poor, or demands it as justice.

**even on those** There are many of you who cannot  
**who are not rich** give of your money, but there is none  
**to undertake social** of you who cannot give of the charity  
**works for the** of your thought, your care, your  
**protection of** work.  
**women.**

Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII. felt some of that

sacred compassion which filled and still fills the heart of Christ. In especial he, the father of the Christian family, was moved with pity for the multitudes of his daughters lying wounded and helpless beneath the cruel crushing injustices of modern industrialism, and he knew that he would not appeal in vain to their sisters of happier condition to come to their rescue; and our present Pope Pius X. has often repeated this appeal.

Their appeals have not been in vain. There has always been a wealth of charity in Catholic women's hearts. Their individual acts of kindness will be richly rewarded by Christ, but individual charity can only touch—can hardly make an impression on the deep black mass of misery that burdens and disgraces every town and every countryside in the land. To introduce a strong solvent into that mass of misery, charity must be organised, must become social work.

To this social work and especially work for women, Catholics, and especially Catholic women, have devoted themselves nobly. In every country on the Continent—would I could say quite as much for Ireland!—thousands and thousands of Catholic women, rich and poor, humble and noble, devote much of their time and sacrifice much of their pleasures. They give their serious thought to examining the conditions of life of their poorer sisters, they visit them in their homes, they gather them together, form them into classes which they often teach themselves, they have them taught trades, they inspire them with hope and courage in face of life's difficulties, with mutual helpfulness and mutual trust, they organise them in various societies of mutual help, and they unite them in associations for the defence of their rights against all oppression.

Such works are the bread which Christ through the mouth of the Pontiff demands of Catholics, for the poor to-day, far more than alms. This is the bread which the power of God will multiply four thousandfold in generous hands. The example of our Catholic brethren in other lands teaches and encourages us to found such works.

**Catholics in  
other lands  
have done much.  
Why not in  
Ireland also?**

## “THE CHURCH AND THE WORKING CHILD.”

The scene of  
Christ with the  
little children

ONE day—you will all remember the scene—Our Lord on one of His journeys through the Holy Land comes to a little village. The villagers, as is the way in the East, gather round the stranger, and with all the more curiosity and excitement as they have heard of this man as a great teacher and a great wonder-worker. The men leave their fields, the women leave their housework, and, taking their children go out and form a group about Him. He seats Himself in one of the open spaces and begins to teach them His doctrine. As He speaks to them (or, rather, talks with them), the little children, attracted by His gentle ways and kindly face, lose their shyness and press close in upon Him. They take hold of His hands and climb upon His knees and interrupt Him with their artless chatter. Each of the mothers gets Him to bless her own little one. His Disciples, knowing how tired He is, grow impatient. They strive to draw the children away and they chide their mothers, but He stops them, saying, “Suffer little children to come to Me.”

And indeed we can understand why He loved to have those little children about Him. Christ hated sin, yet He lived in a world of sin. The men and women whom He met at every moment reeked with sin. The sight of their souls, fouled with impure thoughts and wicked deeds distressed Him; on little children alone could His eyes rest with refreshment and gladness. Looking into their eyes He could see down into the crystal-clear depths of their souls. How precious to His Heart were they! Men and women were already spoiled. But these little ones! Oh! if

He could only preserve them! If He could only have them grow up as they were, in safety and innocence! He would guard them as the apple of His eye.

**is typical of the Church's doctrine.** The Church dwells with pleasure on that scene of the fathers and mothers bringing their children to Christ that He might teach them and bless them, for that scene beautifully typifies her doctrine.

**The Church ever the Guardian of the family.** The parent alone has the right and the duty of caring for the child. No power on earth can dispute that right with the parent. The parent has the duty of bringing the little ones to Christ so that He may teach them and bless them for Eternal life, and Christ will not allow anyone to prevent the parent from bringing them to Him.

The Church has, therefore, always jealously guarded the rights and liberties of the family. She does not contest with the State—how could she? for the authority of the State is from God too—its claim to see that the rights of the children to material well-being and to education are not violated by unworthy parents; but she has always condemned with her God-given authority any attempt of the civil power to encroach on that divine institution, the family.

And what a wonderful institution it is, the Christian family! The father, with his strong and abiding love for wife and children, bravely shielding them from all harm, planning and working unceasingly to provide them with all they need, and in turn finding in them his consolation, his rest, his strength, his joy, his pride. The mother unselfishly working out her divine mission, equally responsible and equally consoled, the stay and the joy of her husband and the trainer of her little ones.

And what a training the Christian mother gives! Sacrificing herself to the children to whom she has given life, she saves their lives a hundred times in the early days of their existence, and as they grow she ministers to their needs and comforts. Gently and firmly she represses their leanings to evil, and draws

out their good dispositions by a thousand ruses of which a mother's heart alone has the secret; she opens their intelligence, forms their judgment, purifies their hearts, excites their energy, leading them sweetly to love God and their neighbour, and to stand by duty amid the temptations of life.

The Church has, therefore, always striven to ensure that neither custom nor law nor economic circumstances should ever impair the perfect freedom of the family in performing its proper functions. She wishes that the father should be able to provide all things necessary for the proper well-being of his home; that the mother should have leisure to manage her household and to train her children; that the children should find beneath the family roof-tree the protection and the maintenance they require, till they in turn be strong enough and matured enough, in body and mind and character, to go forth into the world.

Such has always been the Church's ideal. There have been periods in the world's history when Christian society realised in great measure this ideal.

**For instance,  
in old-time  
Ireland**

In our own country, more than anywhere else in the world, was the family solidly welded together and its rights guarded by Christian custom and just laws. Not merely were bonds of immediate relationship made firm by mutual legal obligations and responsibilities, and extended by means of fosterage, but these binding principles were applied in their measure to more distant relationships, and finally to the whole tribe. The strong family unity and affection which characterises Irish life, especially Irish country life, is a remnant that has survived the grinding to pieces of our civilisation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

**and in the  
Feudal ages.** In England and on the Continent, where society was differently organised, family life was fostered by the feudal system, especially in the rural districts.

As for the towns, their organisation and management were in the hands of the guilds which, guided by the Church, always set the greatest store on the preser-

vation of a vigorous family life among their members. A grown man was never considered as an isolated individual, but always as the head, actually or in prospect, of the household. His wages were fixed with a view to enabling him to meet his family obligations. The price of his handiwork was fixed to ensure such wages. The conditions of his work, its duration, its intervals, its place, were regulated so as not to interfere with the discharge of his primary obligations to his family. In the women's guilds care was taken that the conditions of their work should not be prejudicial to their strength or their good morals.

**How different to-day is the state of the children of the poor,** How different is the state of things to-day! The family is attacked, disintegrated, scattered—to what an extent in some countries we, in Ireland, thank God, can hardly realise. The wide-

spread immorality of the day attacks the very basis of the family. Infidelity attacks it, weakening parental authority by evil laws of succession, and interfering with the sacred liberties of parents in the education and the religion of their children. Socialists attack it, as it stands between them and their dream of universal State management.

**Worst of all perhaps, modern industrial development attacks it, depriving fathers of the wages necessary for the decent support of their households; driving forth mothers from their homes to work; forcing young children too into the demoralising factory, or out on the streets, and causing them to grow up without care or training.**

**Think of the squalid degrading life of the poor quarters and the slums of the modern city, multitudes of human beings huddled together in dingy hovels and demoralising tenements that endanger all the decencies of life, all striving frantically with each other for daily bread—men with men, women with men, children with both—finding in intoxication their only pleasure, their only escape from their misery.**



Industrialism has not given of its riches to Ireland, but it has wrought its terrible work upon our poor people. It has not given us thriving towns or a growing population, but it has given us slums in abundance, and has rotted our towns with the black plague of pauperism.

How can the delicate flower of family virtue thrive in such a fetid, fever-laden, sunless air? How can the garden of the world bring forth flowers and fruit if the young plants are to be torn violently from their roots and native soil, and cast about pell-mell in these filthy, slums, to wither or take root where and how they may?

What kind of training will children get if their mother is absent from home, from morning till late evening, working in some factory or workshop, or charing, or selling in the streets, or begging?

**Mother often  
absent from  
home.**

Happy perhaps, are the 30 per cent. of such children who die in infancy. Nay, happy perhaps, are those many others, scrofulous, tuberculous, deformed, half-developed, who are doomed to die in their early years. For, what must be the fate of those who live? They suffer cruelly from cold and hunger; they are cuffed and bullied by their rough companions, they become brutalised in nature, they live in the streets picking up foul language and hideous forms of vice. Though they remain ignorant—for there is no one to send them to school—they develop a low cunning and sharpness of wit, which enables them to steal and cheat and lie and prey on society; they grow up dangerous and depraved men and women.

**Even if she  
be at home  
things often  
not better.**

Even if the mother stays at home toiling at ill-paid piece-work, or unable to get any work, the case is often not much better. Her home (if one may use the word) may be some ill-smelling room with filth-sodden floor and mouldy walls and broken windows, or perhaps only part of such a room shared with others. One cannot, in fairness, expect her to make such a place cheery and comfortable. She could and would remove dirt, but she cannot change

dirt into cleanliness. Oh! how many of the dwellings of the poor in Ireland are such as would rob a woman who would, if she had a chance, be a cleanly and industrious housekeeper, of all heart and energy. Still less can she give a home-training to her children in such a place. They cannot be kept fettered and depressed in such dungeons. They are young, and need exercise, life, movement. Perforce they go out on the streets and lanes, and live there, learning, boys and girls alike, the secrets of evil in the wild life of street arabs. Their mother may send them to school, but the school day is not the whole day, and the school year is not the whole year; or she may be ashamed to send them to school in their rags, and who can blame her? or, she may have to keep them at home to mind the younger children, or to bring their father's dinner to him in some distant part of the city; or she may have to send them out to sell newspapers or matches or flowers in the street, so that they may add some little mite to their father's wretched wages.

What wonder that a mother's influence counts for little in the upbringing of such children? They grow up in wild independence. They often do not trouble to come home even at night. Some hundreds of boys sleep out of doors in passages and dark corners—I know not where—in the summer time in Dublin; in the same city of Dublin there are between 5,000 and 7,000 children—just think of it—who do not go to any school; and what is true of Dublin is, I take it, true in its measure of other towns.

**The women of  
the poor classes  
nowadays often  
wretched  
housekeepers.**

Then, again, even if the house is capable of being made comfortable and attractive, the poor woman often cannot make it so, for she is generally a wretched housekeeper. Woman has a natural instinct for housekeeping; but this, like every other instinct, is frail and vague at the beginning, easily dulled and destroyed if not exercised. The old-time housekeeping, with its recipes and proverbs and absorbing work—a science handed down for centuries from mother to daughter, among rich and

poor alike—is dead, killed by the development of factories and shops, which rendered most of it useless; and the very different kind of housekeeping suited to the times is perfectly unknown to the poor. It is a fact beyond all dispute that the homes of most of our poor are much more unhealthy, cheerless, and demoralising to family life than they would be if this, one of the most necessary of all sciences, were better taught and practised.

**Horrible condition of working children in the early nineteenth century.** But industrialism has blacker crimes to answer for. Not content with driving forth comfort and pleasure and joy from the nursery of the young, and filling it instead with sighs and tears and frantic rush and filthy disorder, modern industrialism drives forth the little children themselves, and then pursues and hunts them down, wasting their young lives ere those lives have well begun.

The blackest indictment against our civilisation is the history of child labour in the nineteenth century. It is more damning even than the history of women's labour.

In England once some great manufacturers were complaining to a Minister of the Crown of the scarcity of labour. The Minister answered: "Why not use little children?" These words are attributed to Pitt. They were words worthy of Herod. From that time, the beginning of the nineteenth century, till the year 1833, when the age of nine years was fixed as a minimum for children working in factories, whole holocausts of these helpless little beings were ruthlessly sacrificed—a new massacre of the innocents—by men professing to be civilised and Christian. After the invention of steam power there was no longer such need for the muscular strength of man's arm. The steel arm of the machine now did the work, and this steel arm could be directed by the light touch of a child's hand. The delicate fingers of almost an infant could attach the strings and tie the threads of the looms, and, if the children were not tall enough, boxes were tied to their feet to raise them to the machine. Multitudes of children all over England were carried off from the poor-houses

or bought from drunken parents or kidnapped from others, and sent into the factories of the North. There they were shut up for fifteen or sixteen hours a day, beaten with fist or whip, wasted by fever, poorly fed, sleeping in relays huddled together on foul straw, often with chains on their feet to prevent their escape.

Such was the state for long years of much of the industry of England, and it was not very different on the Continent. Through nearly all the nineteenth century the barriers of legal protection were kept lowered in deference to the sacred doctrine of industrial freedom. The terrific energies of machinery and the fury of competition were allowed to play havoc with human lives, and especially with poor children's lives, until, little by little, the plain humanity of public opinion revolted, and forced law after law on unwilling legislatures all over Europe to check this civilised slavery.

This monstrous system has been in  
**Even yet their** great part abolished. Yet not alto-  
**state is often** gether. It is perfectly well known—and  
**pitiable.** has been made officially public many  
 times—that children are, even to-day,  
 often shamefully overworked in factories and work-  
 rooms and in shops, and this not merely in England or  
 in the North of Ireland, but elsewhere too.

Then, there are many employers—nay, hundreds of thousands of them if we reckon (as we should) the shareholders in big companies—who get much of their goods made by children working at home. Oh! how God must hardly hold His hand to strike our society, when He beholds the cold, filthy hovels where thousands of His little ones work wearily, monotonously, from morn till eve, day in and day out, year in and year out, clinging desperately to life, poor little plants forced to bear fruit in what should be their season of flowers.

The employers of these children may  
**How little upper** be good kind fathers and mothers of  
**classes think** families, men and women of refined  
**of them.** tastes and gentle hearts and open-  
 handed charity. They would not be guilty of any

cruel, or even of any inconsiderate conduct to those with whom they come in contact, and yet the wealth with which they indulge their kind feelings to their families and friends is (though they do not advert to it) weighted with the curse of children's misery. Oh! if the social sense of the world were more developed; if the rich could only realise the ghastly tragedies enacted round about them, tragedies in which often they unconsciously play the part of cruel tyrants; if the weary sigh and the consumptive cough and the ceaseless monotonous plying of the sweated work-girl's needle or machine were audible in the office where merchants count their gains, and in the drawingrooms where kind ladies boast of their exploits of bargain-hunting; if the inventions, electrical and the rest, which join the upper strata of society to each other were developed, and joined the lower strata with the upper so that the rich could always see and feel the result of their actions on the poor, then there would be some hope that the kindness, which is dormant in so many hearts, would awake and check the murderous results of ignorance and thoughtlessness.

Again, there is the despairing fact "Blind alley" that the vast majority of young children in Ireland, if they work at all, work at occupations that lead to nothing, and leave them no better prepared to face life.

Their parents are too poor to afford the expenses and time of a good technical training, still less of a proper apprenticeship, and drive them forth to eke out the wretched family budget with their little earnings. Little boys are driven out to sell newspapers or matches, or to run on messages, or to do odd jobs about the streets, or they get employed as caddies or boot-blacks, or helps in workshops or what not; girls sell fruit or flowers or fish or get some wretched job in a small shop; or, if there are any factories in the locality, they may be taken on as helps or hands, employed for their immediate commercial utility to do quite unskilled and easily learned work, learning nothing of any value for their after life.

I know of no more consoling proof of the solid goodness, which not all their wretched conditions have yet been able to destroy in the hearts of our poor people, than the fact, testified to in the Royal Commission of 1902, that the large majority of the street-trading children in Dublin and other cities give up their little earnings to their parents. But does not this make it all the sadder to reflect that children of such good hearts and golden promise should be forced to pass their young lives in a way which simply prepares them to join the crowds of unskilled and starving labourers that fill our cities?

**Importance to society of proper training of the children of the poor.**

The preservation of Christian family life among the poor, the proper education and training, moral, mental, and technical, of the young of the poor classes is at the root of the social question. It is a matter which involves the peace, the security, the continuity, the very existence of society, not to speak of the salvation of millions of immortal souls.

**Dangers of neglecting this training.**

The upward pressure of democracy is irresistible. The people already possess supreme power in theory and will soon possess it in reality too. One cannot but shudder at the future if society is to be preyed on by the large class which we are allowing to be brought up in our midst without the restraints of family feeling or religious sense, without the seriousness and sense of responsibility which a good and solid education gives, without regard for man's law or God's law, each one only acknowledging one law—his own passions and desires. The rise of this dangerous class is the natural result of the disorganisation of Christian life among the poor.

We can see the danger approach. In every country of Europe to-day (Ireland, only for Belfast, would be the single exception) there are, in all the big towns, whole quarters where a well-dressed man or woman would incur imminent risk at night-time of being murderously assaulted.

In Paris, and in some other towns, organised mobs of murderous savages infest the streets. They are merely the vanguard of the new barbarian hordes that threaten to destroy once more—and more completely than fifteen hundred years ago—the ancient civilisation of Europe.

Is it not inevitable? Where and when are those of the rising generation to learn reverence for God's law, respect for the lives and property and rights of others; where and when can they be trained to practise the social virtues of charity, of justice, of patience, and of self-restraint, of industry, except at their mother's knee?

Where and when are the women of the future to learn and practise kindness, gentleness, love of peace, attachment to duty; where and when can they acquire the qualities which will make them modest women, faithful wives, good mothers and thrifty housewives, except as little girls in their mother's homes? Where can they, boys or girls, acquire the delicacy of touch, the sureness of eye, the understanding of theoretic principle, the sense of artistic fitness which will give value to their handiwork and bring honest profit to themselves, except when their memories are fresh, their intelligences alert, and their members supple? When except in their young years, can they acquire the habits of industry and perseverance and the devotion to their trade which will enable them to live in virtue and comfort and independence, and to bring up in their turn good Christian families?

Yes! even our own material interests, the safety of ourselves and of our children after us, demands that we should not allow a godless generation to grow up smarting under a sense of wrong.

**The Church  
most anxious  
about this  
question.**

The Church, moved with pity for these little ones of Christ, and anxious for the salvation of the millions yet to come, cannot view with indifference the sufferings, the neglect, the evil training of children.

She, therefore, speaks out plainly and straightly in the first place to individual employers.

She recalls to them that they assume heavy responsibilities when modern industry places little children at their mercy; that they must not regard such children as so much fuel for their factories or so much cheap labour; that the children unable to assert their rights—and even unconscious of having any rights—have very sacred rights, and have God behind them to avenge them. Employers are bound in strictest justice not to put young people who work for them in their factories or workshops or yards, at any work which might be dangerous to their health and development. They—if they pay for it—have a right to draw benefit from the children's energy; they have no right to lessen by too heavy work, or too constant or too prolonged work, the span of the children's lives. They must consider the labour inspector as the guardian of God's justice, and not as a mere official to be hoodwinked or cajoled.

Similarly, shopkeepers or the managers of workrooms are reminded that when they take in a young person, boy or girl, they are assuming a very serious responsibility; that they are bound to regulate their business, its conditions and hours, so that no injury may be done to the health or the morality of that young worker. If the child lives with them, their responsibility is still heavier. They take on more of a parent's duty, and should show more of a parent's loving care. They must give the child proper food, proper time for rest, a proper degree of comfort, a reasonable time for recreation, and must see that the child performs his or her religious duties. If they take in a young person as an apprentice, they must realise that they are not getting a worker who is to work for nothing for them; that the apprentice is paying in work the price of a proper training; that if the apprentice works for them they in turn are bound in justice to work for their apprentice by careful instruction and conscientious care.



The mistress, too, who takes a young girl into her service, is warned by the Church that she is assuming the responsibility for a soul that has cost Christ

His blood; that she is bound, as a matter of conscience, to see that the girl be not harshly treated or over-worked, that she have every facility and receive every encouragement to perform her religious duties, and that her good morals be not exposed to temptation. If, therefore, through economy, to save gas or coal, the mistress encourages, or even forces—and this is not unknown—the girl to go out constantly in the evenings, and run the danger of idle wandering in the streets of a town where she has no relations, the mistress will have to answer to Christ if anything untoward happen the girl whom He has placed under her charge.

Many complaints are made nowadays of the impudence, the pretentiousness, the independent spirit, the unreasonable demands of servant girls. These complaints, I have not any doubt, are often well founded. A girl receiving fair wages is bound to show a proper respect to her mistress, and to perform fully and well the work she has contracted to do. However, the existence of such complaints proves principally this, that servant girls, like every other part of the labouring class, are becoming conscious that they have not been treated with the consideration or the justice to which they had a right. There have always been good and kind mistresses. There are many such to-day, and they must remember that the good of every class have always to suffer for the faults of the bad. In Ireland relations between employers and dependents are generally kindly and humane; but we have, I fear, been infected by the spirit of Protestant civilisation which regards the dependent as a being of an inferior order, as one unworthy of personal sympathy and interest. A little more considerateness, a little more instruction, and a little less nagging might avail—and have in other countries availed—to render domestic service less repulsive to a girl of spirit and sensitiveness. After all, the grievances

of a servant girl must be fairly real when she will prefer a life of slavish work at starvation wages in a factory to living surrounded by—and to some extent sharing in—the comforts of a luxuriously appointed house.

The mistress is reminded, too, that she is bound to pay her maid the full value of her work, and that the lowest price at which she can get that work done may be less than its value. If she does pay an unjust wage, she is bound to raise it, or at least to make it up in serious and careful training of the girl. Indeed, in any case, she would perform a very beautiful act of charity—an act of charity rare in this country, though common enough in other Catholic lands—if, by personal instruction, she were to make up the deficiencies in the girl's education; or, if by sending the girl to a night school or to a technical school, she were to enable the girl to provide a more comfortable livelihood for herself.

**She insists  
on the rights  
of the young  
workers to a  
fair wage.**

The payment of a just wage to the young is the most important duty which the employer has towards them; for, generally speaking, its observance will ensure the observance of his other duties.

Unfortunately, however, it is in the performance of this duty that employers are least subject to the effective control of the law or of public opinion. The defrauding of the young worker is the sin which employers, and even Catholic employers, are most liable to commit, tempted by avarice or pressed by competition.

Therefore, most imperatively and solemnly does the Church remind all employers, owners of factories, workshops or workrooms, contractors, shopkeepers, masters and mistresses, that they are strictly bound to pay their young workers the full value of their work. She reminds shareholders in companies that they—and not the directors—are the real employers of the companies' workers. How often is this forgotten? At their general meetings shareholders seem anxious about everything except about their duties to the workers (often children workers), from whose labour they get their dividends.

**How this fair wage is to be computed.**

The value of a young labourer's work may be estimated by comparing it with the work of the average grown labourer. If a child does a half or a third of the work of a grown worker, that child has a right to the half or the third of at least the individual living wage of that grown worker. Is this not fair and reasonable? Sometimes the child's work and the grown person's work differ from each other only in quantity, and then the injustice with which the young labourer is sometimes treated is clear enough. More often, however, the work of the adult and that of the young are quite different in character, and cannot be easily compared with each other. Still, even in such cases, common sense can often do what mathematical calculations cannot. When a strong boy, doing almost a man's work, gets a shilling a day, and then, entering a Union, immediately gets for work of a very slightly skilled character three times as much, it is not hard to conclude that his previous wage was an unjust one. And when one hears of cases where employers work their concerns almost exclusively by means of children, dismissing them as they arrive at a certain age, and filling their places with a fresh supply of "cheap and docile" labour, it is not rash or uncharitable to conclude that the value of the children's work is not being given them in wages.

**Excuses advanced by some employers of the young.**

(A) "Their labour is of little value."

only one-fourth or one-sixth?

(B) "Their needs are small."

The plea that the labour of the young is not equal to that of the adult is only a half-truth used as a dishonest excuse. The labour of the young is, no doubt, less valuable than that of the adult, but is it only one-fourth or one-sixth as valuable? And if it is more valuable than this—as it undoubtedly often is—if its value is two-thirds or three-fourths, why is its wage only one-fourth or one-sixth? And so of the other pleas invented to defend the exploitation of young labour. "Young people need less than adults, therefore," it is argued, "there is neither injustice nor hardship in paying them less."

True, but are the needs of the young only one-fourth or one-sixth of the needs of the adult? For instance, are the housing, clothes, food and other necessities of a boy or a girl of 18 years old only one-fourth or one-sixth of the individual necessities of a grown person? Of course they cost far more than one-fourth or one-sixth. Who, then, pays the difference? Evidently the father of the boy or the girl.

(C) "Their wages are supplementary of their parent's wages." "Exactly," some employers will say. "My young hand is, for the most part, supported by his father, who works for my fellow-manufacturer. Therefore, I need only give him a small wage."

If he says this, he is admitting that his business is a parasite on the business of his fellow-manufacturer. But, be that as it may, his fellow-manufacturer will most often deny any obligation to do more than supply the individual needs of his workman, the father of the child. In other words, he will deny any obligation of paying a family wage. Nay, the employer of the child also, if he employs men as well, will often deny any obligation of paying a family wage. Who, then, is to support the child? The employer of the child admits only the duty of paying for part of the child's support. The employer of the child's father will often deny his obligation of paying any part of it. Who, then, is to pay for the rest of the child's support? You see how some employers are inconsistent as well as unjust. In paying their men-labourers, they say they are not bound to support, even partly, the children of those men, and then, when they are paying the children, they say they have already given their father something for their support.

If the family wage, prescribed by the teaching of the Church, were always given to the man-labourer, children would not be forced to work at the early age at which they work now. They would spend their early years more usefully in acquiring a better education and training or a more thorough apprenticeship. The grievances and the discontent of the labouring class would almost cease to exist, and the wealth-producing energies of the community would be vastly increased.

(D) "Better give them a small wage than have them idle."

I need hardly mention the excuse, as transparent as it is hypocritical, given by the man, who, while underpaying young workers, actually poses as a social benefactor.

Such a man has been known to say: "If I did not keep my business going, my poor little work-children would be exposed to the vagabond life of the streets; they would not be, as now, adding to their fathers' resources." This may be true, but it is equally true that it is not necessary for this philanthropist to rob his children in order to save them from the streets. The first duty his philanthropy ought to suggest to him would be to refrain from robbing these children, for robbing them he is, if he does not give them the value of their work. Until he gives them that full value, the public will say with justice that he is no philanthropist, but a robber and a coward. Men would resist him, women might do something to defend themselves, but, as children can do nothing, as their parents cannot help them, and as the State is slow in helping them, this rich and heartless man swoops down on them and robs them of their little earnings.

When is an employer justified in giving them less than a fair wage?

I know perfectly well that the working classes are not the only classes which have to struggle desperately for a decent existence. In our country, bled white as it is by the long-continued draining away of its wealth—its life-blood, there are many employers, especially small ones, who do not pay a proper wage to children, and yet who can honestly say that they do not make much profit out of these children, but can hardly keep their business afloat. I have already explained\* what are the conditions in which an employer may justly say that he cannot pay a proper wage to his adult labourers. These same conditions, and these alone, would justify him in paying his young workers less than the proportion of wage which their work bears to that of adults.

\* Lecture II., pp. 33-36.

**The Church  
calls on the  
State to protect  
child-workers.**

The Church, therefore, solemnly warns individual employers of their obligations to the children who work for them. This, however, is not enough. The awakening of individual consciences cannot, of itself, restrain the struggle and scramble of the modern world for wealth and power. The richer men grow, the more easily they grow richer still; the richer they grow, the fiercer grows their thirst of gain and their desire to crush their rivals. It is becoming harder and harder for the less wealthy man to keep his feet in the rush. It is growing harder and harder for the just man to reconcile his conscience with his interests. Nay, though God often blesses the just man with prosperity, he often tries him with misfortune. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that the State should intervene. She alone has at her disposal the policeman and the process-server. She alone can strip from the man who has grown wealthy on underpaid children's work the glamour of social respectability. The State alone can curb the strong and protect the weak by wise and just laws, firmly administered.

"When there is question," says Pope Leo XIII., "of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and the helpless have a right to special consideration. Those who are badly off must rely chiefly on the help of the State. It is for this reason," he continues, "that wage earners, who are undoubtedly among the weak and necessitous (and which of them more than the child workers?) should be specially cared for and protected by the Government."

Pope Leo XIII. and our present Holy Father have been incessantly pressing on Catholic statesmen and Catholic social workers their duty of striving, so that the State pass laws, first, for the protection of the family—in which alone the young can be reared and trained—and then for the establishment of proper systems of apprenticeship and technical training for the young. It will be our duty too to urge the necessity of these measures upon all our administrative bodies. and

especially upon those in whose hands the general interests of the country will lie.

**She appeals to all Christians to help the working children by social organisations.**

But there is much of this work of social reform which no State can do. Much of it requires human sympathy, personal care, individual attention, kind speech—things which no State institution can ever command. Much of it can be done only by works of Christian charity, enlightened, organised, suiting the needs of the present hour.

**Such organisations flourishing in other countries.**

The authoritative words of the Popes, the impassioned appeals of Bishops, the initiative of devoted Priests, and the zeal and genius of a whole host of Catholic laymen, writers, orators, and organisers, have at length roused the energies of Catholics all over Europe to undertake such works.

Orphanages and hospitals for the young are blessed works and necessary, but I do not speak of them. I speak of works which—I make bold to say—are of still greater value, works which will check the evils that prey on the young so that it may not be necessary afterwards to cure or alleviate them. The care and cure of the little ones who have been knocked down and trampled on in the struggle of life is a good work; but a better one is to strengthen them so that they may not fall.

To this work thousands of Catholic men and women of all classes of society, of all grades of wealth, are devoting themselves nobly to-day in other countries. To this work they sacrifice much of their social pleasures or idle trifling or well-earned rest. They give to it their time, their thought, their labour, themselves. They plan and form and keep in existence scores of social works of various kinds to preserve family unity, to save infant life, to keep the young off the streets, to fill in the gaps of their schooling, to teach them the virtues of thrift and self-restraint and diligence and mutual help, to have them taught useful trades, so that they may grow up in comfort, and lead useful, peaceful, Christian

lives. I shall speak more of these social works in my next lecture. They are the charity which Christ asks of us to-day for His little ones, and I have confidence that the kindly and religious heart of Ireland will not refuse it to Him.

We read in St Matthew's Gospel :  
**Christ appeals to us all to save the young.** " Jesus calling unto Him a little child, set him in the midst of the disciples," and then He bade them admire the innocence of the child and extolled his simplicity ; and then He says : " He that receiveth one such little child in My name, receiveth Me." Then, as He reflected on the sin and misery that cruel men would bring upon the child, His words take on a certain fierceness very rare in Him : " He that scandalises one of these little ones, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be tied around his neck and that he be thrown into the depths of the sea."

Christ spoke those words over the heads of His disciples to all generations, to all of us.

Can we resist Christ's appeal to preserve innocent from the corruption of the streets and safe from the dangers of slum life, that soul on which His sacred eyes gazed with love ; His appeal to prevent sorrow and suffering from quenching too soon the gladness that should dance in the child's eyes in the morning of life ; His appeal to us to save their tender little limbs from being crushed by heavy work, or wasted by starvation, or perished by cold or frost ?

If our hearts are so stony as to resist Christ's appeal, well then, we must take care that we neglect not His warning ! for in His words we can discern the fury of the vengeance with which He will visit those who injure His little children.



# THE CHURCH AND TRADE UNIONS, STRIKES, ETC.

**The spirit of solidarity** **O**NE of the most remarkable phenomena of modern times is the development among men of the spirit of solidarity. It is the spirit which urges those whose economic interests are similar to unite for the protection of their interests. We see those who are engaged as labourers in the same trade, or in similar trades, uniting to defend themselves; and we see those employers who are engaged in the same or in similar businesses uniting on their side.

**which was strong in Middle Ages** Such a spirit was strong and wide spread in the Middle Ages, but, as solidarity (to be anything more than a name) implies a considerable limitation of individual liberty, it was opposed to the whole spirit of the great revolution of thought which swept over Europe in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and which tended to disintegrate society, and make its individual units independent of each other.

**is again growing.** The spirit of union is again growing fast. The future will probably see the nation grouped in professional associations and vast federations of such associations, in presence of which the traditional forms of government—Monarchy, Republic, Czardom—will play an insignificant part. Social classes and corporate interests, rather than local and individual interests, will probably be represented in the Parliaments of the future.

**Organisation whether of labourers or of employers not wrong.** In any case this growth of solidarity, on the side of labour or of capital—whether we like it or not—is certainly not essentially wrong. The true enemies of Christian philosophy to-day are not those who unite for their common interests. Those

who so unite are, in so far, the true heirs of the old Catholic traditions, the true upholders of natural law and natural right. Those who persist—if any yet persist—in seeing in the massing and organisation of labour something wrong or even something abnormal are completely out of harmony with the spirit of the Catholic Church.

The words of Pope Leo XIII. in his Encyclical are perfectly clear. **It is sanctioned by the Church.** “It is with pleasure,” he says, “We witness that everywhere are being formed societies consisting of workmen alone, or consisting of workmen and employers. It is to be desired that their number may increase and their efficacy grow stronger.” And the present Pope Pius X. repeats the same teaching. “What institutions are to be founded? Your thoughtful charity will decide,” he says. “Those which are called Unions appear to Us to be of most timely use. We recommend you to take a special care of their foundation and their development.” Again, one of the greatest Cardinals of the day, speaking to a meeting of workmen only two years ago, says—“Workmen have the duty of uniting to discuss their trade interests and of defending them. Your religion, my good friends,” he says, “does not force you to submit to the hardships of your condition without trying to render them more bearable. Workmen do not understand their duty in the matter of social action. You wish to improve your condition. It is not ideas or wishes that will help you. To these you must join action through your Unions. You must aid yourselves.” The words I am about to quote are not those of an irresponsible demagogue, but those of a great Catholic Archbishop instructing his flock. “Workmen,” he said, “unite. It is your right. It is your duty. No one can prevent you from uniting. He who opposes your uniting violates a natural right, and commits an action which is contrary to the principles of morality.”

Not merely do Catholics all over the world consider Unions of workmen as perfectly normal and lawful developments within the State, but they regard with satisfaction the vast Federations in which Unions of

the same or of connected trades band together, and they consider these Federations as another step in advance towards social peace.

**Such Unions dictated by a right and natural instinct.** The tendency of those whose interests are similar to unite is a natural, universal, spontaneous tendency. Man, experiencing his own weakness, is urged by a dictate of nature to join himself to his fellow. From this dictate arises Civil Society, and within the pale of Civil Society various other associations of more limited scope.

Unity of profession is a natural bond. The parish, the district, the county create certain bonds between those who dwell within their borders. The fact of people thus dwelling near each other establishes a certain community of interest; and the representation in Parliament of such territorial divisions is an acknowledgment and a ratification of such community of interest. Now, is not unity of occupation a similar bond, nay, a stronger and more natural bond than any founded on mere locality? Is not our trade, our business a more intimate part of our social existence than the place where we live? We may change our dwelling place—we often do—but we rarely change our trade or business. When, therefore, there exists a number of individuals absorbed by the same daily occupations, exposed to the same dangers, opposed by the same forces, having the same interests, having a character and mentality and habits formed by the same early training and influences, made like to each other not in something merely exterior but in something which is as a second nature, the association of such people is a natural and spontaneous union in harmony with all their instincts.

The right of those who have common interests to defend them by common action is not a right which any human law can give or take away. It is inherent in society. It is independent of any positive law. Law has no power over it, no power except the power to recognise it. "The Civil Society," says Pope Leo XIII., "which would forbid the formation of private societies would be attacking itself, for all societies,

public and private, arise from the same principle, the natural sociability of men."

**Unions alone seem capable of restoring peace to Society.**

Our industrial system is in anarchy; the relations of employers to each other, and of workmen to each other, and the relations of employers to workmen are not ordered to the general good, and Unionism alone seems capable of so ordering it.

At present Capital and Labour are acting as if they had different interests, and, without Unions, there would exist no machinery to secure the common interests of both. If, however, Capital on the one hand, and Labour on the other, be organised, they will be two powerful institutions, respecting each other, giving and taking, settling their differences in harmony, throwing light on each other's interests, each working for the advantage of both.

Between all contending parties negotiations are necessary, and for negotiation some order must exist on both sides. Surely if the two great powers of Capital and Labour were organised and stood face to face, each knowing the other's strength, each measuring the other's resources, each fearing the other's determination, above all, each recognising clearly its opponent's prosperity to be necessary for its own welfare—that in fact a victory could be bought only at the cost of almost utter destruction—surely then there would be more chance of abiding peace than there is to-day, when society is engaged in a vast disordered struggle, each one fighting desperately for his own hand, each one looking for some one weaker than himself on whom to prey.

Strong organizations of Labour and of Capital are the only institutions that give the remotest hope of bringing back peace to the world.

**They afford a means of settling the conflicts between Capital and Labour,**

In the first place, they, and they alone, seem likely to provide adequate machinery for the establishment of collective labour contracts. Without such associations the labour contract is for the most part merely the exterior consent of the workman to the employer's conditions,

a forced consent causing irritation and often not felt to be binding. For any fair and lasting contract there must be a certain balance of power between the contracting parties, and that can be secured only by the forces of Labour and Capital being organised. These can then meet, discuss and negotiate. Such collective agreements are like treaties between nations, not provocations to war, but securities for peace. They leave Capital its proper freedom in all that regards the carrying on of the business, in the choice of machinery, of materials, methods of manufacture, markets, and they restrain that liberty only in so far as freedom means injustice. Such collective agreements will free the conscientious employer from the choice forced on him by his unscrupulous competitors—the choice between his conscience and his interests; they will free him from much of the tyranny of supply and demand, they will arrange common customs of sale, a common attitude with regard to workmen and buyers, they will help him to regain the art of the master-workman of old—that of becoming rich without ruining others.

Give labourers strong Unions which will enable them to make fair terms, and they will enjoy true liberty of contract, they will be too strong to be driven to accept famine wages or iniquitous conditions of work, they will not have the perpetual goad of wretched homes and starving wives to drive them to revolution.

Such collective contracts, which have become very common in the more highly skilled trades, have been, I know, often violated.

Yet it must be remembered that man's mental attitude is not changed in a day. In the transition from an epoch when individual force stood for right it would be indeed strange if some men were not still inclined to have recourse to their old methods of redress. Though some men will always be faithless, and collective contracts (just as individual contracts) will be occasionally violated, it is fair to remember that those that have been broken (in England for instance) form an insignificant minority of the 10,000 such contracts, which

now regulate the wages and conditions of work of nearly two and a half millions of labouring men.

**and offer  
many other  
advantages.**

Beyond the formation of such collective contracts, Unions, if managed with intelligence and inspired by just principles, should have a wide sphere of beneficial influence. They should play a great part in the moral and social life of the community. They should have an excellent educative effect on their members, developing in them a spirit of self-sacrifice, self-respect, foresight, responsibility. They should force their members to study the general state of their trades, and bring clearly home to them that there are bounds beyond which their thoughtless claims would lead to their own ruin.

Unions have in many countries founded a whole host of institutions of incalculable benefit, not merely to the trade which founded them, but to society in general; technical schools, laboratories for research, libraries, statistical and scientific journals, labour exchanges, insurance funds, loan funds, clubs of various kinds, and co-operative institutions. In France alone there are 10,000 such subsidiary institutions founded and kept in existence by the Unions.

**Though many  
Unions are  
Socialistic in  
tendency, they  
are not  
inherently bad.**

It will, no doubt, be said that this conception of a Union as an institution making for peace is not the conception of it which is most commonly present to-day in the public mind.

It is perfectly true that many Unions to-day, however unexceptionable may be their right to exist, are as a fact leading to Revolution. Under the influence of Socialistic principles they are more intent on fomenting class hatred and violent disturbance than on securing a peaceful conciliation of the various interests in the State.

This cannot be denied. Yet it is fair to remember that Unionism has as yet incorporated only a small minority (nowhere more than a fourth part) of the labouring class, and that like all minorities conscious

of vigour and of a future and not yet fully recognised as a legitimate power, they are naturally given to noise and violence. They feel their strength, but are often not matured enough to feel their responsibilities. They are as organisms growing and pushing their way in the body politic which has not yet got accommodated to them. Besides, it must be said that their excessive love of violent methods is not all their fault. It must be admitted that many of the improvements wrought in the state of the labouring class—improvements which everyone now recognises to have been necessary and demanded by justice—had to be extorted by strikes or the threat of strikes.

In any case, the violence of Labour Unions, their misuse of power, and their extravagant pretensions do not justify us in condemning them as unjust in principle. Even on the Continent, in Italy, France and Germany, where they are more deeply imbued with Socialist principles, and where they have acted with greater license and violence than in these countries, Catholic prelates and Catholic writers feel no more inclined to condemn them as essentially unjust, or to lament their existence as abnormal, than they feel inclined to deny the right of a wicked man to exist. Let me quote for you the words of Archbishop Ketteler, whom Pope Leo XIII. once spoke of as his "master" in social science. "The spirit of association," he says, "rests on a principle of Divine order, and is essentially just, even though the men who form such associations often do not recognise God's authority and wrest these associations to evil ends."

**Attitude of the  
Church towards  
them,**

It is true that just as no individual man fulfils his proper functions in life, or can attain to real happiness, unless he conforms to the laws of righteousness, so, neither can associations, whether of employers or of labourers, perform any real service to society unless they too conform to the eternal laws of justice and moral conduct.

The Church, therefore, is within her sphere when she

dictates the moral principles which such associations must observe in their conduct, and when she lays down the moral conditions on which she will allow her children to join such associations.

The Church has her own proper sphere, the teaching of the Gospel and the conduct of souls to their eternal home. Institutions of the economic order, such as Trade Unions, mutual aid societies, and the rest, which have for their object the organisation of labour or the appropriate distribution of wealth, do not fall within the sphere of the Church. They are of the civil, not of the religious, order. They have an independent position with regard to the Church.

Still, all such societies must necessarily formulate principles of action which may or may not conform to the moral law ; and the Church in approving or condemning such principles is only doing her duty of teaching God's law to mankind. In particular the varying phases of the modern industrial struggle are perpetually confronting associations, both those of employers and those of labourers, with problems that are inextricably bound up with the moral law. For instance, questions concerning wages, contracts, strikes, prices are often not questions of tactics to be settled as expediency suggests, but are questions which affect the consciences of millions of men. Unions are forced to form with regard to their own members, or to other Unions, or to the general public, codes of law and principles of conduct, which may or may not be subversive of the eternal principles of right and wrong.

**and in particular towards non-Catholic Unions.** Hence arose a very serious question for the Church. Could Catholics join non-Catholic Unions? To this question the Church could only give one answer. She could not view with indifference her children entering associations in which their faith or their moral outlook might be perverted. The Holy See therefore encouraged and urged Catholics, and Bishops and priests repeated the Pope's encouragement and exhortations on a thousand platforms, yes, and in a thousand pulpits, to form



Catholic Unions; and such Catholic Unions now exist strong and vigorous in nearly every country on the Continent. In Germany there are 300,000 men in the professedly Christian unions, one-third of all the Catholic workmen in the German Empire. In Austria there are 100,000 in the Catholic Unions, in Belgium 71,000, in Switzerland 12,000. It is not surprising to find that these Catholic Unions have been crowned with signal success in winning their rights, for they take their stand on more solid principles; they act with a deeper sense of responsibility than other associations; they inspire employers with a greater confidence that they will keep their agreements; and the idealism inherent in all religious truth, the order and discipline, the unselfishness and perseverance which characterise all religious movements, give to Catholic Unions a solidarity and enthusiasm and efficiency which those pursuing mere expediency can never rival.

Of course if a Catholic Union finds itself in agreement with a Socialist or a non-religious Union co-operation with such is not unlawful. Moreover there are places where Catholics are not numerous enough to form effective Unions. If in such places there exist other Unions, whose doctrines and acts are not contrary to Christian principles, the Holy See tolerates her children entering them under certain safeguards and conditions.

**Dangers  
threatening  
Irish unions**

This subject has a very real importance for us in Ireland to-day. Ireland is not an industrial country, the majority of her labourers being agricultural. Moreover she is a very poor country and therefore has a comparatively small demand for the products of skilled labour. Lastly, partly as a result of the deliberate crushing of our industries, and partly owing to our lack of the well-ordered charity which should urge us to help our fellow-countrymen before others, we bring from other countries an extravagant amount of the industrial products which we should normally manufacture at home. The consequence is that our skilled labourers are abnormally few in proportion to the unskilled and

feel themselves too weak in number to form independent associations. They therefore join English Unions.

This necessity—if it is a necessity—is to be deplored from the point of view of nationality, and not less from the point of view of religion. It is to be feared that many of the great British Unions are deeply imbued with Socialism, and that they hold principles and advocate courses of conduct of which Irish workmen cannot, as good Catholics, approve. Irish tradesmen and employees have, I hope, learned the lesson of their recent rough experience when in the Railway strike they were made the catspaw of the British Unions. They should realise the unnaturalness, the foolishness, and the unpatriotic character of such alliances. It is to be hoped sincerely that whatever political changes are impending may result in independent Irish associations which, knit together by the triple cord of material interests, national feeling and religious belief, may introduce an era of prosperity and peace into Irish industrial life.

#### **Strikes.**

A few words on the terrible and delicate subject of strikes may not be here amiss, as showing how irreconcilable are the principles which guide some modern Unions with those which should inspire any Christian association; as showing, too, how difficult and delicate are the moral questions which may have at any time to be decided in labour conflicts.

#### **False notions of strikes.**

For many Unions to-day a strike is merely an episode in the war between the classes, a declaration of open hostilities, to be made whenever a good opportunity occurs; a kind of preliminary manœuvre preparing the battalions of the people for the universal strike which is some day to destroy the present system of society.

#### **True notion of a strike.**

For the Christian Union a strike is something very different. It is a declaration of war, if you will, but of an economic war to be declared only as a last resort, for a just cause and to be carried on without violence.

Every man is by nature free to give or to withhold

his labour, just as every man is by nature free to offer or not to offer employment. However, just as an employer may in a given case (e.g., where the worker would be exposed to suffer grave inconvenience, etc.) be bound, in justice as well as in charity, not to dismiss his workman without a sufficient reason, so the workman in a given case (e.g., when his action would entail grave inconvenience to his employer) may be bound, in both justice and charity, not to withhold, without a sufficient reason, his continued services from his employer. The right, however, of the workman to withhold his work, whether alone or in concert with others, can be justly exercised if a sufficiently grave reason exists, just as, on the other hand, an employer can, if he have a sufficiently grave reason, dismiss a man from his employment. The labourer will have this sufficiently grave reason for discontinuing his services if the employer persists in withstanding the claims which the worker, or the body of workers to which he belongs, has a right to insist on. Man, and bodies of men, must have some natural defence against injury and some means of enforcing their just demands. For this reason the right to strike is a natural one. A strike may be just and even a duty.

Now, if an individual workman acting singly urge his claims upon his employer he will most generally fail. But if many such workmen combine in a strong Union, and thus can threaten a simultaneous ceasing of work, they can oppose to the power of Capital the power of concerted numbers.

The right to strike under certain conditions can no more be denied the workman than his right to unite. At the same time it is a matter of concern that many workmen, even those professing to be Catholics, do not seem to realise the heavy responsibilities which such a right involves.

**When a strike is lawful.** It is not an absolute right, to be exercised at any time. It is a relative right conditioned by duties of prudence, charity, humanity, justice.

**Its cause must be a just one** In the first place it cannot be exercised without a just cause. It cannot, for instance, be exercised in order to extort a wage which would be unjust.

**and a very serious one.** Not merely must the object of the strike be just ; it must be a weighty object, a very weighty object, proportioned to the sufferings and risks which are incurred by the terrible decision of declaring a strike. Strikes are a true "plague to society," to use Pope Leo's words about them. They mostly fail—it is said that 60 per cent. fail—and, when they fail, they inflict severe and permanent losses upon the workers.

In any case, whether they fail or not, they foster a chronic spirit of ill-will between the classes ; they are often the occasion of violent and lawless outbreaks, hard to restrain among unemployed and excited men ; they cause appalling suffering and anxiety to multitudes of innocent women and children ; they seriously inconvenience the public, they interfere with trade and sometimes drive it to other countries. It is only right reason that such misery and disturbance and harm should not be brought on society without the very gravest cause.

In this connection, however, it is only fair to remember that just as an incident, trifling in itself, may involve some principle important enough to justify a State in unchaining the horrors of war, so some trifling incident, some unjust dismissal for instance, might possibly—though rarely—justify recourse to the supreme arbitrament of a strike.

**It must have a reasonable chance of success,** Just as a declaration of war, owing to the fearful calamities and sufferings which the war is certain to entail, is unlawful whenever there is not a reasonable prospect of success, so a body of workmen who, without a well-founded hope of success expose themselves their families and the general public to the certain suffering and inconvenience of a strike, are acting unlawfully.

**and must  
be a last  
resource.**

Another condition, evidently necessary in order that a strike be lawful, yet a condition often not complied with, is that every other means of ending the conflict should be seriously tried before recourse be had to such a terrible weapon of defence.

This need not necessarily mean that warning must be always given before the formal declaration of a strike. Such a warning is generally equitable in order to avoid needless loss to the employer, but if the employer be acting unjustly, and cannot be brought to observe his just obligations by the peaceful methods of negotiation, etc., his employees may be justified in striking without further warning.

**It must not be  
in violation of  
a just contract.**

Then, again, a workman is bound in justice not to strike work until the time agreed to in his contract have elapsed. He would not, however, be acting sinfully in so quitting his work if the contract were radically invalid; for instance, if the wages to which he had been forced to consent were so low as to be unjust. Neither would his ceasing to work be wrong if the employer by unjust treatment of him were to forfeit the right to the fulfilment of the contract; nor if, by continuing to work he would be exposing himself at the hands of his companions to serious personal danger or inconvenience.

**It must be  
carried on by  
just means.**

The question, however, on which Catholic principles are most directly opposed to the principles of too many Unions is the question of the means which may be employed in carrying on the strike.

**Violence must  
not be used.**

A man may never violate the strict right of another. Therefore the destruction of the employer's materials or machinery is never lawful. It is unlawful also to use violence in repelling those who wish to take the strikers' places. The State uses violence and armed force in punishing malefactors or in suppressing disorder, but in so doing she strikes those who by their crimes have

forfeited their right to impunity. A private individual may in self-defence strike down the ruffian who attempts his life, but in so doing he kills one who by his crime has forfeited his right to safety. But the workman on strike who uses bodily violence against those who wish to replace him is using violence against those who in most cases are doing—as far as justice is concerned—what they have a perfect right to do. Such men who offer to take the places of the strikers may be acting most grievously against charity in acting as they do, they may be breaking the solemn promises they had given their comrades, or—as is perhaps most often the case—they may be merely poor men more in need of wages than the strikers, but, in most cases, they are not acting against justice, and therefore cannot be repelled with violence.

The reasonableness of this will appear more clearly in the light of an example. A very wealthy man comes into a small country town. He wishes for some reason or another to get the complete monopoly of trade in the town, and he proceeds to undersell all the other shopkeepers of the place. He may be doing this through some spite against the shopkeepers of that particular place, he may be sinning most grievously against charity and laying up Hell's torments for himself by so acting, but, after all, he owns his goods, he has the right to sell them cheaply, and precisely because he is not acting against justice the shopkeepers, though they are justified in defending themselves in other ways, have not the right to use violence in defending themselves against him; they are not justified in attacking his person or in wrecking his shop with sticks and stones.

It might occasionally happen that such men, professional strike-breakers, etc., would be acting against justice. This would be the case, for instance, if, not being themselves in grave need, they professed their willingness to take the place of the strikers for less than a living wage, or to submit to other unjust conditions of work. Yet even in such a case violence is not permissible to the strikers. The use of violence,

except in the case of self-defence, is not permissible to private individuals or to private associations (such as are Unions, Federations, etc.), but only to the supreme authority of the State.

It may be urged that the strikers are in such cases acting in self-defence, that their rights to continue in their jobs are being unjustly attacked by the strike-breakers, and that therefore they are justified in having recourse to violent methods of defence. This plea, however, is not valid. The right of a man to his job is not a strict right in the sense in which a man has a strict right to defend his person or his property from physical attack. For this reason, and also because the evils of public disturbance, riots, etc., far outweigh any advantages that could possibly accrue from the use of violence in such cases, it is not lawful for the strikers to defend themselves by violence.

The men who offer to take the place of strikers are acting in a way calculated to render vain and fruitless the sacrifices and sufferings and risks faced by the strikers. All the same to repel them by violence is to do wrong, and one can never do wrong in order that good may come of it. The end does not justify the means.

You may ask what is the use of acknowledging a right to strike if the right to prevent others from taking the strikers' places is not recognised too? I answer that the strikers have the right of defending their jobs but not the right to use violence for that purpose. They have other means, peaceful means, at their disposal, moral suasion, agitation, appeals to public opinion, and also the method of "peaceful picketing."

Indeed, all experience proves that the peaceful methods, the just methods, are also the most efficacious methods of carrying on a strike. They win for the strikers—provided the strike be a justifiable one—the sympathy, the respect and the admiration of the general public, and public opinion in a very powerful (but curiously intangible) way goes far to make or mar the success

**Peaceful  
methods are  
the most  
efficacious.**

of strikes. Peaceful means, too, prove far better than violence—which is the weapon of the weak—the strength and discipline of the strike organisation. They do not exasperate the employers or render them more obstinate. They thus do more at once to induce and to force the employers to come to terms.

Violence, on the other hand, is rarely of any effect. It invariably alienates the good will of the public even when the public at the outset considers the claims of the strikers to be reasonable. It almost always brings in the use of the armed forces of the State which is in duty bound to repress all disturbances of the public peace.

If, however, the suggestion (which most Catholic writers approve) were adopted, namely, that the members of each craft should be legally bound to belong to some Union, which would have the form and legal status of an incorporated Society, the interests of the individual workers in each craft, and the interests of each craft and of industry at large would be fully secured, and the very harassing difficulty of the “blackleg” or “scab” would be almost altogether obviated.

A “sympathetic strike” is declared by some body of labourers with a view to supporting the claims of other labourers. It is plain that the question of its lawfulness is an extremely serious one. If the doctrine which holds it to be lawful be understood in a universal sense, viz., that any body of men has the unconditional right and even duty of declaring a strike in order to support the just quarrel of any other body, the doctrine is subversive of society, and spells ruin and suffering for all classes in the State, for workers employers and the outside public. At any given moment there may be in some place or another some body of workers out on a just strike. If all other workers were justified in going out on strike to support it, then in the case of some small labour dispute in a small country town, for instance, there would be a general paralysis of industry and a general



disturbance of the public peace throughout the whole country—indeed, throughout the whole world if (as is often said to be desirable) the solidarity of labour becomes international. In order that a few score of men should win their cause (which they could easily do by means of their Union) millions of men and women in no way concerned with the quarrel would be exposed to unspeakable misery and suffering. If such a principle were adopted by the whole labouring class all social intercourse would be paralysed, all the advantages of our civilisation (which the poor enjoy as well as the rich) would be destroyed, all mercantile concerns (factories, shops, offices, banks, etc.) would have to close, the cultivation of the soil, the production of the wealth on which rich and poor alike depend would come to an end. There would be universal starvation and red-handed anarchy.

A universal sympathetic strike could never be necessary for the protection of the rights of individual workers.\* It is impossible to conceive a cause that could justify it. It would be a remedy out of all proportion to the evil it would be intended to cure. It would be as if a doctor, called in to cure some trivial scratch on a man's leg were to amputate the limb to the imminent danger of the man's life.

The policy of "tainted goods" is "**Tainted Goods.**" really the same (in its effects at least) as that of the sympathetic strike. A moment's thought will show that if adopted in its universal sense by employers or by employees it would rapidly extend the sphere of any strike or of any lock-out to every form of industry in a country, and indeed to every kind of industry throughout the world. To preach such a policy as a universal principle could never be justified, and would be gravely sinful. Though

\* On the other hand, everyone now recognises that the rights of the individual labourer can only be efficiently guarded by the solidarity of his fellow-labourers, that is of those engaged in the same trade and united in an organisation sufficiently numerous to protect the individual members.

in the wild and whirling rhetoric of industrial conflicts it is sometimes recommended it is never applied in its entirety. Employers do not apply it for they see it would be madness to do so. Neither do the responsible leaders of the labouring classes adopt it in its entirety, because they see that it would mean the destruction of their own organisations, and that it would ruin the general interests of the labouring classes. Much as labour leaders speak of the international solidarity of labour, it would, I think, be extremely unlikely that the Unions of England, for example, would, in carrying out the "tainted goods" policy, go out on strike themselves in order to support a strike in France or in Ireland.

The doctrine of the universal sympathetic strike is utterly indefensible. Does it therefore follow that a sympathetic strike is never justifiable? No.

**Is the Sympathetic Strike ever just?**

A sympathetic strike, like any other strike, is to be judged justifiable or not according to the principles already laid down. It must be insisted on, of course, that the reasons which would justify such an extended strike would require to be of proportionately greater importance and gravity than those which would suffice to justify an ordinary strike, and that proportionately greater efforts should be exerted to avert it.

It might be said that as a general rule such a strike would be legitimate only in the case where a body of workers is united by some real and strong bond of trade-interest with those whose cause it espouses; and this could generally be the case only where the organisations helping each other are employed by the same employers or by employers in similar businesses, for instance, in the case where a Union of masons' labourers supports the quarrel of a masons' Union or of a carpenters' Union; or in the case where the workers on one railway system support those who work on another system. In such cases men in helping their fellows might have a reasonable cause for refusing

their services to employers who are treating those fellow-labourers with injustice (as in the case referred to of masons, masons' labourers, carpenters), or they might be in reality defending their own interests (as in the case of railway-men referred to). The disturbance to the public peace would follow not as the direct result of their action, but merely as an accidental consequence. If, however, a Union of barbers strikes to support the quarrel of, let us say, a Union of carpenters, it is clear that the barbers are merely disturbing the public peace in order that the carpenters may reap some advantage from the disturbance. It is never lawful thus to directly injure the public good in order thereby to gain some advantage for a particular class.

It may be argued that employers who have no real bond of trade interest with each other (e.g., brewers, bakers, cloth manufacturers, builders, etc.) sometimes combine in Federations, and that therefore each of the various bodies of men engaged by such employers, in coming to the help of its fellows is in reality defending itself.

Such a combination of employers would, of course, be acting unjustly if it were to support, by a general lock-out or by financial assistance, any of its members who might be engaged in an *unjust* quarrel with his employees. In such a case it would be lawful for the Unions, whose just rights would be thus challenged, to combine in support of the injured workers, and—of course only as a last resort—declare a concerted strike.

As has been said before, a solid organisation in Unions of the workers of each trade, and a solid banding together of such Unions in Federations, and, on the other hand, a similarly firm organisation of employers is the only system which can provide adequate machinery for the intelligent discussion of the interests of Capital and Labour, and can lead to mutual understanding mutual confidence and peaceful negotiation. Such a system alone can force those on each side to have regard to the claims of justice and God's law, claims which have been so often neglected by both sides.

Such a system alone can put an end to the destructive conflicts which are growing more numerous every day, and are inflicting such terrible calamities especially on the poor.

Over the furious battlefield where Capital and Labour are struggling there are two signs of peace appearing in the Heavens. On the one side, Capital is coming to see that its old Liberalistic principles (condemned long ago by the Church) are fatal to it. On the other, the more intelligent of the leaders of Labour (even those whose principles are far removed from those of the Church, socialists, syndicalists, etc.) are getting afraid of the awful spirits of destruction which they have summoned up upon the earth; they are growing more conscious of their responsibilities, and in England as elsewhere (except sometimes in the heat of conflict), they repudiate in the interests of Labour itself these senseless and violent appeals to combat.

There are certain absolute necessities of modern life such as gas, water, **strikes in public services.** electricity, railways, letter carriage, &c., which are entrusted to great public or quasi-public services. Now those who are engaged in such services evidently do not on that account cease to enjoy their rights as free men. They, like other employees, possess their natural right of defence, the right that every man has to withhold his labour given good cause. Yet owing to the fact that their uninterrupted services are immediately and absolutely necessary for the peace and well-being of the whole State, such men are bound by a heavier responsibility in the exercise of their rights. They cannot ignore the absolute necessities of the general public, and therefore a more than ordinary care and deliberation is incumbent on them before they can be justified in striking. If strikes occur in such services the State is bound to employ her forces, even her armed forces, to prevent the suffering and calamities which would result to the general public. On the other hand the employees of such public utility services have a right to be com-

compensated for the extra difficulties which the nature of their work places in the way of the prosecution of their rights. The State is bound therefore to provide the very fullest machinery—equitably formed arbitration boards and the like—for permanently and effectively giving satisfaction in a generous spirit to the employees of such services. A conscientious government cannot allow those who thus work for the general advantage of the citizens to be oppressed or harshly treated.

**Unions are unfortunately confined almost entirely to skilled trades.** Unionism has undoubtedly improved the condition, not merely of the trades that have adopted it, but, to some extent too, the general condition of the whole labouring class. It is, unfortunately, however, the classes of more highly skilled labour—precisely the classes which least urgently stood in need of protection—that have profited most largely by the advantages of combination.

**Unions would do much to improve the classes above the tradesmen,** The class above that of the artisan, the vast middle-class of society, with its various grades and strata—farmers, shopkeepers, commercial agents of various kinds, teachers, civil servants, clerks—this vast class has not yet (with the exception of the legal and medical professions) awakened to the opportunities which united action holds out to them.

Yet this middle class suffers very keenly under our industrial system. It is crushed from above by the superior power of the very rich, and from below by the claims of the poor. It is often dependent on those above it and easily hurt by those below. It can compete with difficulty against Capital above, and below it are the banded forces of skilled Labour. The frenzied competition of modern life often means for the middle classes a desperate struggle to maintain their social status, the conditions of life that are indispensable to their content. For them poverty is well-dressed poverty, often a more painful poverty than poverty in

rags, for it adds the mortification of wounded pride, the chafing of sensitive culture, the anxious effort to keep up appearance, to the physical pinch of want.

**and have done  
so in other  
countries.**

Now the principle of Association promises the middle classes to alleviate their stressful state while sparing their honour and self-respect. To give one instance, shopkeepers of moderate means on the Continent have made many and highly successful attempts, by means of various mutual agreements and co-operative schemes to make headway against the competition of the monster shops, bazaars, arcades, that are often huge capitalistic enterprises. The farmers of many continental countries have anticipated by many years the farmers of Ireland in perceiving the advantages which co-operation has in store for them.

It is merely a want of social education which prevents the middle classes in Ireland from forming the many various co-operative schemes which would enable them, as their brethren on the Continent, to resist the absorbing power of large capital, and by which they could secure from society at large in which they perform such useful functions, a more adequate return of peace and comfort.

**Unskilled  
workers**

Then, again, below the class of skilled artisans there are the teeming masses of the very poor; day-labourers, unskilled workmen, with nothing to depend on except their physical strength. Numerous as they are, forming the majority—in Ireland the vast majority—of the labouring class, they are isolated one from the other, and cannot easily unite, or at least cannot easily form Unions such as the carefully planned organisations by means of which the skilled tradesmen can so efficiently protect their interests.

They are lacking in the qualities requisite for the formation of strong associations. They have not the education and breadth of mental outlook which the possession of a skilled trade implies; they have not the

sense of fraternity which the possession of common knowledge and a common skill confers ; they are not brought into constant touch with each other by their work, and do not learn to know each other and to form bonds of friendship and trust ; they do not look forward to acquiring excellence in any particular work, and therefore cannot hope for better wages ; they have no ambition and little self-respect ; their wages are so poor and precarious that they cannot lay by part of them for the apparently remote advantage to be got in a Union ; worst of all, each of them feels that the thousands of those about him are all his enemies, envying him his job when he has got one, and ready to supplant him at any moment. Their character deteriorates, they become apathetic, improvident, subservient, slavish. They can be treated (as the heartless and significant phrase of industrial language has it) as “cheap and docile labour.”

And this description which I have given of unskilled labouring men is true (in fact, more universally true) of all women wage-earners whether skilled or not. In their minds a Union is the institution where their husband or their father spends an immoderate amount of money and consumes an immoderate amount of time in talk, with no other result than the bringing on of a strike which reduces them and him to misery. Women generally do not settle down to the study and practice of a skilled trade because they most often hope that marriage will free them from the necessity of work. Besides, whether skilled or not, they are very much divided by class distinctions, distrustful of each other and easily frightened and bullied. I doubt if out of the half-million and more of women wage-earners in Ireland there are 4,000 in any Union. The wealthy women who talk much of women's rights have not yet—in Ireland at least—begun to help, as Catholic women do on the Continent, their poorer sisters to unite and win for themselves a decent livelihood, one of their proper and essential rights.

**and all women  
workers are  
hard to unite**

**but Catholic  
social activity  
can do much  
to uplift and  
organise them.**

Catholic Social writers have not found it so difficult to induce the middle classes to adopt the methods of Christian fraternity for their protection; the Church has not found it so difficult to unite the more skilled kinds of labourers in strong and effective Unions; nor has she found it hard to create in many of the Parliaments of Europe a Catholic Party to be the foremost champion of every law which aims at the regeneration of the poor.

But though laws can do much there is much more they cannot do; there is much which has to be done before they can do anything. To improve the most defenceless classes of society, unskilled labourers and women workers, this vast mass of pauperised and semi-pauperised men and women, living in black squalor and suffering, many of them sunk in degrading habits of drunkenness, absorbed by their sense of oppression, yet unable to rise from it, sometimes apathetic, at other times senselessly violent, ignorant of the true remedies for their evil plight and helpless to apply them even if they knew them, strangers to each other, distrusting each other, furiously competing with each other—to uplift, I say, these poor creatures, to put into each of them a heart of courage and hope, to enlighten them as to their true methods of redress, to train them in the social virtues of sobriety, thrift, self-respect and mutual trust, and then to form of them strong disciplined battalions of good Catholic labourers, battalions which will, in fighting for their rights, respect the rights of others, and will resist not merely those who oppress them from above, but those who wish to destroy all society from below, is a gigantic work and not the work of a day or a year.

It is this work which the Church with her inexhaustible resources of charitable energy, with her God-given wisdom and her genius for organisation is at present engaged on. It is this work which is the object of those thousands of social institutions of whose marvellous success on the Continent we in Ireland, alas! know so little.



## “THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL WORK.”

**Religion  
necessary  
for social order.**

LET us imagine a very small nation of a homogeneous character, and let us imagine that, by some extraordinary chance, the most suitable form of government, the most suitable laws, the most appropriate economic measures were devised for it, and applied by men of the greatest wisdom and ability. There would still be—who can doubt it?—in that small nation much discontent, much affliction, much injustice, many crimes. Why? Simply because it is human passions that cause most of the misery and crime in society, and because no laws can still the passions in the hearts of men. Man’s passions will always urge him to commit crimes and take the risk of being punished, and they will urge him to find some means of eluding the most cunningly contrived law.

How much more rife, therefore, will misery and crime be in a large nation, with its infinite complexities, especially if (as is always the case) the past has planted widely in that nation evil customs, jealousies, hatreds, and especially if the Ten Commandments of God are not held in much reverence among its people?

Remember, I do not say that laws are useless. They are absolutely necessary. The better and more suitable they are, and the more justly they are administered, the less scope will be given to the evil passions of men the less suffering there will be, the more prosperity and happiness; and therefore it is our duty as good Catholics to work according to our opportunities for the enactment of good laws. A society, however, ruled by the wisest of human laws, but neglectful of God’s law, would

be an inferno, a pandemonium. Laws can punish the detected outcome of some passions and diminish the opportunities of others, but they cannot penetrate the soul or control the inmost springs of human action. Religion alone can do this.

**Social mission  
of the Church.**

Hence we see that even for the peace and welfare of human society the Church has a mighty mission to perform, and that it is futile to try to cure the social evils of the day if liberty is not given to the Church to fulfil the mission that God, the Maker of society, has given her.

The Church not merely speaks to the consciences of individuals, telling each one of his duties in all the circumstances of life, but she speaks to men grouped in the societies that men form, the nation, the city, the family, the association. Each of these societies has liberty to work out its own welfare; but that liberty, like every true liberty, must be exercised within the bounds set for it by God's Church, the exponent of God's Law.

**Her  
organisations.**

The Church is not merely a teacher of true principle. She is an inspirer of good action. She not merely sows ideas. She brings them to fruitfulness. She not merely instructs; she organises. She first forms individuals to virtue, and she then associates, directs, energises them.

From her earliest days she has shown a genius for banding men together in associations of all kinds, confraternities, sodalities, guilds, communities of monks and nuns, brotherhoods of nobles, associations for teaching, for nursing, for working, even for fighting. In her two thousand years of life she has brought forth innumerable such associations, and her fertility is not less to-day than in the past. What an advantage this genius gives her in our age, when all hopes of peace and order are placed in solidarity and union !

And what associations can be compared with hers? She not merely forms them, she informs them with her spirit, enabling them to thrive and work

**Their strength** with energy and effect. She alone can infuse into their members the virtues which make associations firm—self-sacrifice, patience, hope, true charity. She alone can counteract the disintegrating forces that are always at work in societies—jealousy, distrust, and fickleness.

**is Christian** This power to bind together and  
**charity.** weld and harden the crumbling clay of society is above all the sacred fire of charity which Christ has placed in the shrine of His Church.

Charity, unselfish love, was not quite unknown in the Pagan world of old, even as it is not unknown in the Pagan world around us to-day; but it was as some rare and beautiful flower causing men to stop and wonder. It stirred up the praises of the rhetorician and roused poets to sing.

This flower now grows in profusion in the garden of the Church, so that we of the household almost cease to wonder or to notice. It was almost a new virtue when Christ said: "A new commandment I give you that you love one another." It was indeed quite new, inasmuch as Christ, in ordering us to love our neighbour for the love of God, has made of natural charity a supernatural virtue. Human pity and sympathy and love retain all their old beauty and fragrance, but Christ has given them a new glory and strength, a new radiance caught from the brightness of Heaven.

What makes the world of to-day so bright compared to the Pagan world we read of is not an exacter notion of justice, or an exacter carrying out of justice, but it is the charity which Christ has brought into the world. The world, even the unchristian world of to-day, is far more Christian than it admits. Much of the charity, which it has inherited from the Christianity it combats, lingers in the recesses of its heart.

**Justice  
insufficient  
for social peace.**

Justice is necessary that peace and order may reign in the world, but justice must be completed by charity. A world ruled by justice alone would be an unbearable world. If charity ceased her beneficent work for a single day, such a fearful explosion of suffering would result, such an agonising cry would rise up from earth to heaven that those who now cry out that rights alone should be the basis of society, and that the gifts of charity are dishonouring to those who receive them, would stand aghast at the work of blind justice and would call out for tender-eyed charity to come back in mercy to the world.

Justice can lessen poverty in the world. She cannot quite banish it. Foolish are the dreams of those who doubt Christ's word: "The poor ye shall always have with you." Justice can lessen the suffering of the world, but she can never change the world from being a valley of tears. When the relations of justice have been harmonised—if ever they be—with the greatest nicety, the restless, selfish passions of men, the myriad sicknesses that prey on poor humanity, the hand of death snatching away the bread-winner or guardian, the blind violence of storm and flood and fire and earthquake, will still continue to strew the earth with suffering.

**Charity urges  
the Church  
to work to  
secure social  
peace.**

Charity is the great regenerating force, the great consoling force which Christ has placed in the world. Charity consumed the Sacred Heart of Christ. It consumes the heart of His Church. The object of the Church's existence is to save man from the evils that afflict man's soul, and therefore, indirectly at least, from his bodily evils too, which drag down and destroy his soul.

Therefore the Church has been perpetually called on to settle the social question, the question of man's necessary comfort in the world. In the past it was the slave question or the serf question or the burgher question.

To-day it is the Labour question ; and she will settle it, not merely by the authority she has to define human rights, but by the marvellous power given her by God of devising and inspiring works of charity.

**Distinction  
between  
charitable  
work and  
social work.**

Charity urges the Christian to work for his neighbour, but this work may be one of two kinds. It may be what is usually known as charitable work, or it may be what is called social work.

By charitable work I mean, for instance, providing for the blind, the maimed, the orphan, the sick, the giving of alms to the deserving poor. By social work I mean work which aims at *preventing* poverty, sickness, suffering. Charitable work cures the wound ; social work prevents the blow from falling. Charitable work prevents the effects of evil ; social work cuts at the root of the evil.

**The latter  
more  
necessary  
than the  
former.**

As I have said, we shall always have with us the impoverished, the orphaned, the sick, the disabled, and in succouring them we shall be continuing Christ's work ; but nowadays the world is so disorganised, whole classes of men are so afflicted and helpless, there is so much destitution and suffering, untimely death and avoidable disease, that charity—old as the Church yet ever new—has undergone a great evolution. It urges us now not merely to staunch the wounds received in the struggle for life, but to calm that struggle ; it urges us to repair and reconstitute the diseased and weakened organisms of society, the family, the city, the state ; it urges us to uplift and weld together whole classes of individuals now helpless because isolated, so that they may be able to serve God in comfort and peace, and save their souls.

**Examples.** To exemplify what I mean. To give a sum of money or food or clothes to a poor family, is a good work and will be richly rewarded, but to give the head of that family paid work, so that he may support it in decent independence is better. The giving of work is better than

the giving of alms. Alms merely carries the poor man forward on the road of life, leaving him as weak as before. But wages for work strengthens his steps and enables him to bear life's burden with patience and cheerfulness.

To contribute to a hospital is a good and blessed work, and there will be always many who will need the hospital; but to use one's influence and efforts to have good and healthy dwellings built for the poor, so that there may be less need of hospitals, is a better work.

To provide proper care for a young girl, a victim of tuberculosis contracted in some sweating workshop, is a noble work, but to organise the hundreds of her sisters so that they be not doomed to the same fate, is yet a nobler one.

To put an orphaned boy into an orphanage may be a great work of charity, but it might be a more blessed charity to provide otherwise for him, putting him in the house of his kinsfolk and giving him a useful trade.

After all, hospitals, orphanages, old people's homes, and the like, necessary works as they are to-day, and beautiful works of charity, are rather a sign of social decay and disruption than marks of social progress. Normally the family should keep its aged and infirm beneath its own roof-tree. In the good old Catholic days orphanages were for foundlings only. The hospital was the refuge only of the passing stranger, or else of those whose diseases were contagious or could not well be treated in the home.

Society, if properly constituted, ought to support and widen and render more fruitful the activities of its natural organisms the family, the city, the association, and thus render superfluous a great part of our charitable institutions.

For want of charitable thought and care the hand of almsgiving is often misdirected. To give alms on the street to the beggar may be a blessed deed, but to give it, as one easily may, to the drunkard who will hasten his steps to spend it in drink, or to the idle impostor,

may bring a blessing on the giver for his good will, but may bring a curse on him who receives it.

After all, everything worth doing at all ought to be well done. Therefore, above all, our charity should be done well, not merely with a good intention, but so as to procure its fullest measure of good. Charity implies very sacred interests, interests of God, of our neighbour, of ourselves; it is infinitely rich in spiritual and material blessings, and should therefore, in proportion, be done with all the care and perfection possible.

Nay, if God blesses the man of charitable heart who makes a sacrifice of money, He will bless that man doubly and trebly if he has previously made the still greater sacrifice of time and care in finding out how the money may be best applied.

**Charity in Ireland is very abundant.** The charity of Catholic Ireland is magnificent. Our orphanages, asylums, retreats, refuges, hospitals and other such institutions are nobly supported.

No country in the world, according to a modern English writer, a Protestant, gives as much in proportion to its wealth as Ireland. This is all the greater glory to our people, as the budget of Irish charity is not swollen by large donations of the very wealthy—for we have few such—but by the generous sacrifices of our middle classes, whose struggle in life is generally very hard, and by the mites of the poor.

**Lack of social work in Ireland.** But while this is very true and very consoling, and is the pledge of a glorious reward for our nation in the world to come, there is another fact not less true, namely, that nowhere in Europe, I make bold to say, is social charity, as distinguished from alms-giving charity, less known or practised.

In every parish in the land, in town and country, there are many pious, earnest Catholics who perform their religious duties with regularity, whose lives are models of all the domestic and religious virtues, who give open-handedly of their hard-earned, and not too-abundant means to the charitable institutions of their

neighbourhood, and who give generously alms to the poor whom they meet in the street or on the roadway.

Having done this they rest content. It never occurs to them that their charity should mean anything else than alms-giving or their annual subscription to a hospital or an orphanage.

Yet the enlightened Christian charity recommended by the Pope, and which we must practise if we are, as St. Paul says, "to re-establish all things in Christ" (Eph. i.), means much more. It means that we should interest ourselves in the conditions of life, in the prospects and difficulties of our poor brethren; that we should examine into the causes of their suffering; it means that it is more blessed to prevent disease than to cure it; more blessed to give good dwellings to the poor than to give them hospitals for diseases contracted in bad ones; more blessed to enable the widow to rear her children than to place them in industrial schools; more blessed to give work than a dinner or two to the starving man; more blessed to have the young taught a useful trade than to secure them a job that will teach them nothing; more blessed to educate in Christian principles and unite in Christian associations the helpless day-labourers and the work-women than to give them odd doles or odd jobs. In short, God asks of each of us to give to His suffering brethren the charity of our personal effort as well as that of money, the gift of self—a greater and more costly gift than that of alms.

The great lack of social sense among Irish Catholics is due in some measure to our strange system of higher education which cramps or misdirects the energies of the unrivalled teaching agencies which we possess. It is in part due also to the absence of those open, savage attacks on morality, family life, religious liberty, and religious education which have roused Catholics in other countries from the torpor in which they too, fifty years ago, were sunk. Our Catholic social activity would not be so lamentably deficient were it not for the fact



that a very powerful, wealthy, and splendid Protestant nation has forced its literature and much of its mentality and its moral habits upon us, and now, in spite of telegraph and newspaper, curtains us off, more effectually than perhaps ever before in our history, from the rest of the Catholic world.

To describe at any length the profuse flowering of social charity in that Catholic world is, of course, impossible on this occasion. All we can do is to take up a flower here and there, cast a hasty glance on it and pass on. There are books, descriptive of these social works to be had, books which, though they are humiliating reading for the Irish Catholic, will certainly make him admire, and let us hope rouse him to imitate.

**In Germany** It was in Germany, and chiefly owing to the inspiration of a great Archbishop, that the Church first set herself to the task of rebuilding society on Catholic principles. Her success has been amazing. Catholics are increasing rapidly—far more rapidly—than the rest of the German people in numbers and wealth and influence. Socialism, the offspring of irreligion and discontent, though stronger in Germany than anywhere else in the world, has not been able to get any hold on German Catholics.

In every little village in the Catholic parts of this Empire, there is a Catholic Agricultural Society with its savings bank, its loan fund, its study club, its conferences. In such societies there are some 400,000 Catholics. In every town where Catholics are numerous there are Catholic Workmen's Clubs, 800 in all, containing altogether between 200,000 and 300,000 members. These clubs are—as often as not—presided over by priests, and have attached to them many subsidiary institutions, various kinds of mutual help societies, building societies, co-operative stores, libraries, evening classes, and the rest.

Then there is the gigantic network of Christian Trade unions, boldly professing Christian principles, formidable

armies of Catholic labourers, but with peace and not plunder inscribed on their banners, and causing no stir of anxiety or suspicion in those who use and enjoy their wealth as Christians should. Founded in 1894, they soon formed a Federation (of which the first president was a priest), and now they count almost 500,000 members. Then there is the more comprehensive People's Union in which Catholics of all classes, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, nobles and humble folk, labourers and employers, men of the city and the country, some 800,000 in all, are banded together in an organisation almost as minutely elaborated as an army. To serve as the directing staff of this organisation there is a huge array of writers, lecturers, organisers, agents, professional experts, and a connected system of inquiry and advice offices. It supports a press which sends forth many daily papers in different towns, and a review with a circulation of 650,000, and scatters broadcast over the country annually many hundreds of pamphlets and flying sheets. To give political expression to the Catholic population of the Empire, there is the Catholic Centre Party, the strongest, the most united, the most highly equipped party in the German Parliament, always standing for Catholic principles, always defending all true Catholic liberties, liberty of religion, of education, of work, of association, always championing the rights of the poor and the oppressed.

In France, Belgium, Holland, Austria, and elsewhere. Spain, Switzerland, the Catholics are similarly organised, though, except in Belgium, not yet so thoroughly nor with such centralisation and effectiveness as in the German Empire.

**Examples of  
some social  
works  
commonly  
found.**

I shall not, however, dwell further on the vast political organisations of Continental Catholics—though these too have their fruitful lessons for us also—nor yet shall I describe the Catholic Trade unions. It will be more to my purpose at present, and more instructive, to mention at random a few of the social works of more restricted aim which

are the fruits of this modern renaissance of Catholic charity.

For instance, in towns, especially the manufacturing centres and the University towns, scores of Catholic men of all ranks and occupations—University professors, doctors, lawyers, officers, merchants, civil officials, students, clerks, artisans—come together in small groups on certain evenings in the week to devote themselves seriously to the study of social questions. The work entails a different sacrifice for each, some social amusement, a few hours taken from the study for a profession, a restful evening after a day's work in office or factory or schoolroom. They get some competent person, one of themselves or another, to give them lectures on some question of social economy, or on the Catholic view of some social problem. They get up discussions to make sure of their ideas. They ask questions, propose difficulties. Each of them gets a particular subject to make up, say, the prices of labourers' dwellings in the locality, the real owners of some slum district, the movements of the population of some poor quarter of the town, the conditions of work and the rate of wages obtaining in some specified industry. The results of these enquiries are then read, discussed, and tested. These men thus come to have an accurate and living knowledge of the conditions of the life of the poor, can penetrate more surely into the causes of their misery, and are in a position to consider what remedies can be applied to relieve it.

**and of women.** Women too form similar clubs. Young and old, married or unmarried, high-born ladies whose ancestors fought in the Crusades, wealthy ladies of the bourgeoisie, their poorer sisters too, shop assistants, work girls, women in fact of all classes and ranks, unequal in wealth of gold, but equal in the more precious wealth of charity, meet together on a level of perfect equality, just as they meet every Sunday before the altar at Mass, to study how best they may serve Christ's poor. They seek dis-

tion and consolation in something besides dress and frivolous amusement. They have not recourse to the excuse that their family duties leave them no time. They do not think it inconsistent with their family duties to sacrifice occasionally an hour or two of their novel-reading. They thus gather together at regular intervals and get themselves instructed in Catholic social principles and ideals. They institute personal inquiries into the lives of the poor in their neighbourhood. Sometimes, for instance, they map out a quarter of the town, each taking a certain street or a portion of it, the people of which she visits personally.

Such work is delicate. If those who undertake it, especially those of higher rank, betray any vulgar inquisitiveness, if they let it be thought that they are attracted by the novel sensation

of a descent into the underground of society, if they show the least air of priggish condescension, the sensitive pride of the poor instantly takes alarm. Those, however, who are inspired by Christian charity and act with tact and sympathy, will easily have revealed to them the secrets of slumland, an unknown land to those outside it; they will discover the feelings and the views of the poor, their difficulties, their times of stress, their expedients and resources. Such workers have already procured us more useful information and more fruitful suggestions than could be got from the books of learned professors, or the dry impersonal statistics of officials.

Again, there are in most towns information offices, (or "Secretariates") where the poor and ignorant may get advice free of charge in any difficulty that may befall them. Here there attend at regular intervals those whose advice may be of most use, doctors, lawyers, magistrates, civil officials, experienced business men, men and women of special knowledge or of special influence. These give to the poor, not money, but time, trouble, knowledge, thought. They tell the widow where best her son, given his particular aptitudes, can be put to learn a trade;

**Difficulty and importance of such societies.**

**Information offices.**

they instruct the poor man who has been defrauded how he can most easily get justice ; they show the man who has got into the usurer's hands how he can free himself ; they advise the ailing, or get them into the hospital where they will be best attended ; they put the needy in touch with the various agencies (State agencies or private institutions) that best suit them. There are hundreds of such offices in working, and they save annually immense sums of money to the poor. Some of them are the creations of Trade Unions, others are the fruit of the charitable initiative of pious rich people.

**Organisations  
for saving of  
children.**

Then, again, there are countless social works aiming at the preservation of family life among the poor. Naturally these works are interested first in the mother. Whole holocausts of children die because their mothers have to work too hard or too long, or cannot give them proper care. In some places the significant fact has been noted that when strikes occur among women workers, infant mortality decreases. Thousands of children, too, are killed by their mothers' ignorance. To cure this awful evil, Catholic ladies form leagues. They get themselves informed of every birth occurring in a district. They place their own superior instruction at the disposal of these poor mothers. They organise funds to provide all the attention and attendance proper for the mothers and for the children for as long as may be necessary. Better still, and as is oftener the case, they get the married women of the poor to form mutual help societies for these purposes. There are thousands of little infants saved every year to their mothers and their country by the charitable devotion of Catholic women.

**Many similar  
works.**

There are many other societies of similar kinds, schools for mothers, crèches, where working-women may leave their children while at work ; societies for supplying at nominal charges to mothers of infants children's clothes, new milk, and things of the kind ; societies for bringing the anæmic pale-faced

children of the slums to live for a fortnight or a month in the fresh mountain air or by the seaside. In France rich ladies who can find the leisure, do not rest content with supplying the money for such vacation colonies, but go themselves with the children, live with them, teach them, care them, and organise amusements for them.

Another work of incalculable social benefit is that of housekeeping schools for girls. The proper spending of money is as important for prosperity as the earning of it. Man's sphere is to provide, woman's rather to spend. The housekeeper's business is to make the best possible use of her resources, to preserve the health of the home, to brighten and adorn it, and make it a charm against the wasteful public-house and the demoralising street corner. But, alas! too often the home of the poor man is given over to the bizarre instincts of a young wife, ignorant, slatternly and improvident.

These housekeeping schools receive girls after the ordinary school period. They are not technical schools; for, after all, housekeeping is not a trade, but the duty of all women. Belgium alone, a country little bigger than Munster, has nearly two hundred such schools, some of them with four hundred girls. They are often founded by the State, but often, too—and outside Belgium in every instance—they are due to the private initiative of Catholics. These schools are said to have done more for the material prosperity of Belgium than the rise which has taken place of late years in labourers' wages.

In these schools the young girl is taught the necessity of order, foresight, thrift, and cleanliness; the proper care of furniture and clothes; sewing, knitting, the making and mending of clothes; washing, cooking, the preservation of food from spoiling; the keeping of household accounts; the proper things to buy, and how to procure them; the principles of hygiene, household remedies, the care of infants, and the mental, moral and religious training of children. Of course, the programmes in such schools vary according as they are

in the city or country, and according to the industries and conditions of the locality.

Then there are vast numbers, especially in France, of boys' clubs and girls' clubs, "patronages," as they are called, from being placed under the care of some patron saint. In the boys' clubs young men, and older men, too, devote some of their time one or two evenings in the week to the task of preserving the young from idle vagabondage and of instructing them in useful knowledge. They attract the boys to them by organising all kinds of games and amusements. They get them taught singing, music, fencing, gymnastics; they read to them, they supply them with good books; they teach them the Catechism and their religious duties, and thus arm them against the false principles and the evil influences to which the poor in Continental countries are so much exposed. They teach them whatever subjects these boys have not learned at school, and especially they get them thoroughly instructed in some skilled trade.

Catholic women do the same work and girls. In the great industrial centres these "patronages" have done a gigantic work for the uplifting of factory girls, seamstresses, and the other victims of sweated labour. In these clubs Catholic ladies provide these poor girls with places where they will get a taste for amusement without grossness, and where they can be instructed without the stiff discipline and formalities of a State schoolroom. The girls are taught the ordinary school subjects; they are, above all, taught housekeeping, and encouraged to rival each other in putting their lessons to good use in their own homes. They are taught how to form various kinds of mutual societies, and, in spite of enormous difficulties, have been enabled to form very efficient Trade Unions for their protection.

In Paris alone there are 356 such Patronages, and in all France (now as ever the motherland of heroic

devotion to noble causes) there are 4,000, some founded by priests, others, perhaps most, by Catholic ladies or gentlemen.

**All these works primarily religious.**

If these social works be undertaken from unworthy motives, from a desire of novel sensations, or from a morbid curiosity, or from a love of ruling and ordering others, or from a snobbish desire of associating with the people of high rank who may engage in such work, they are doomed to barrenness. Neither can they last if they are inspired by merely natural motives, by the generous enthusiasm of youth, or by natural kindness of heart. Nay, even when they are done in the spirit of true charity, there is the danger that the immensity and urgency of the work may result in a merely external energy, which may be misdirected and cannot be counted on to endure.

Consequently, it is the first characteristic of such Catholic works, the secret of their success, that they are above all religious works, done for supernatural motives. To ensure this, those who organise them insist that an eminent spirit of piety and a regular practice of Catholic duty should characterise their members. Their meetings begin and end with prayer; Benediction, Rosary, and other devotions are an essential part of their working.

**Example.**

For instance, there is a large sodality at Barcelona. It consists chiefly of University students, not generally the most pious class of the community, in Spain or anywhere else. This sodality is the centre, the mainspring of a large number of other social works which it keeps going; Catechism classes for poor children, night classes for working boys, the visiting of hospitals and prisons, a workman's sodality, a choral society, a boy's technical school, a gratuitous medical service, a gratuitous legal service, a savings bank, a large co-operative society, and many mutual societies of various kinds.

The working of all these institutions evidently calls



for an enormous output of energy on the part of the sodalists, yet the directors of the sodality consider that the only means of keeping its members braced up to their work is to insist on their leading a very intense religious life. Hence the sodalists have weekly meetings for religious exercises, they have to attend weekly lectures of an advanced kind on Catholic doctrines, they have to go to Holy Communion once a month. So strict are the regulations that if any member is negligent in performing the charitable work assigned him, or if he misses monthly Communions four times running, or if he misses six successive weekly meetings, he is expelled from the sodality. However excellent a young man he may be, if he does not live up to this high standard of Catholic apostolic spirit he has to go. Yet, though there are many expulsions every year, this great sodality is ever growing, and now counts nine hundred members.

**Lack of such works in Ireland.** What have we in Ireland comparable to these works? It has been said that Protestants in Ireland do more social work than Catholics. They certainly do more in England. We have recourse

to the poor excuse that those who do such work among us become priests or nuns. Certainly Irish Catholic layfolk leave charitable work for the most part to religious, and think that they have done enough when they have supplied the necessary funds.

We have the Vincent de Paul Society, though even it is not as flourishing in Ireland as on the Continent. We have some ladies who visit the sick. All honour be to them—the greater honour as they have not the encouragement of finding themselves imitated. We have raffles or bazaars in which charity is copiously watered with frivolity and amusement. We have, I say, a certain amount of charitable personal work done by layfolk (though even it is not comparable to what layfolk do on the Continent), but of the more constructive forms of charitable endeavour, of Catholic social work properly so called, there is little, very little indeed, in

Catholic Ireland. In this respect as in so many others, we are thirty or forty years behind the times.

This is a sad pity. Our lack of care  
**Pity of this.** for our neighbours' welfare is all the sadder as it is quite strange to our national tradition. It is quite un-Irish. Those of you who know the history of our land know that the clans, into which Ireland was divided were organised as large families knit together by the spirit that binds a family, the spirit of mutual sympathy, of mutual help and responsibility. Differences in wealth did not dig chasms between classes. The poor were not strangers to the rich, or enemies, or beings of a different clay, but were brothers. Work was not thought a disgrace to the trader, nor was trade a derogation in the eyes of the noble and the rich and the learned. Society was not organised on business lines—as the detestable phrase has it—but on a principle of brotherhood, a principle racy of the soil, ancient as the race and afterwards affirmed and consecrated by Christianity.

**Ireland a  
 favourable  
 soil for such  
 works.**

The problems of Irish poverty have not the magnitude which tempts the social worker to despair in the huge industrial towns of other countries. Is not our negligence all the less excusable?

Much of our people's poverty is the result of their clinging to Christ in the past. Would not this have won a special blessing from Christ on our work? But, above all, our apathy is the sadder, as nowhere else in the world has a richer harvest been lost, nowhere else has as fruitful a soil been lying fallow waiting for workers.

Our nation is poor. All its classes have a hard struggle in life. Most of our people are well acquainted with suffering, and therefore each one is the fitter to sympathise with those harder stricken than himself. Irish hearts are kindly hearts. They have not been hardened by generations of infidel and immoral propaganda. The breath of God's grace has kept them fresh and warm. The social worker in Ireland would not have

had to contend with the darkness of religious ignorance, nor would he have had to remove the dead weight of anti-Christian prejudice, or to face the taunts and the blows of infidel fanaticism.

Nowhere in truth would and ought Catholic social action have flourished more than in Ireland. Yet the very reasons which make this reflection on the past so sad, suggest a consoling hope for the future.

Trusting in God's continued goodness, we may, I think, look forward to a day when our people, established in peace, and guided as in the past by the spirit of Christ's Church and by the words of Christ's Vicar on earth, may restore order and comfort and prosperity to this land, and may adorn it with a profuse, a beautiful and a varied flowering of Catholic social works, making it again, as ten centuries ago, the fairest spot in all the Christian world.

**Our religion  
should be  
more fruitful  
in practical  
charity.**

The love of God, the service of God, is the meaning of our lives. We are on earth for nothing else. All else, in so far as it is not God's service, is mere vanity and wasted energy. God's service is to absorb all our energy; it will be our only happiness on earth, our eternal, all-satisfying reward. But God's service is the doing of God's will. One cannot love God or serve Him and not do what He wishes. Now, God has not shut each of us up, as it were, in a little cell, and ordered us to serve Him thus. He has placed us all together. He calls on us for certain acts directed to Himself, acts of faith, of hope, of charity, acts of worship and prayer and thanksgiving; but He calls on us for many more acts besides, acts directed also to Himself but affecting our neighbours too. Most of the virtues that bind us to God, that make us holy—truthfulness, fidelity, charity, patience, meekness, justice—have reference to our neighbour. Our individual perfection, and ultimately our perfect happiness, is at the same time the perfection of our social relations.

Therefore, Christ explains and urges on us our social duties, by the mouth of the man whom He has placed

in the world to speak in His name, the head of His Church; He speaks of them when we come to speak to Him before the Altar, and when He comes to recline on our hearts at the Communion rail; He speaks of them to us in the silence of our own room when we pray; He speaks of them to us from His pulpit, in the confessional, and by means of good books and good advisers. And there is none of those social duties of which He speaks more often or more urgently than charity.

Charity is the very essence of Christ's religion. He came to save us by winning our love. He has spent his heart's blood for us to win our love. He is present with us night and day to win our love. He has won it. We are only anxious to show Him our love. He tells us Himself how to show it. "A new Commandment I give you that you love one another, as I have loved you that you love one another." "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you love one another." "If any man receiveth one of these little ones in My name he receiveth Me." And the second commandment, like unto the first, is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Nay, He tells us, that when we come to the end of life, He will meet each of us at the gates of death, and will take account chiefly of our charity, and by that settle our eternal fate. He will say to you, "Come ye blessed of My Father, possess you the Kingdom . . . for I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink . . ." And when you will say that you did none of these things to Him, He will say, "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."

And it is not as though He will be pleased if we have done these things, but does not insist that we do them. No! For He will say to some: "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, for I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink, . . . Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, you did it not to Me. And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting."







